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LV 9
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② Master Strikes
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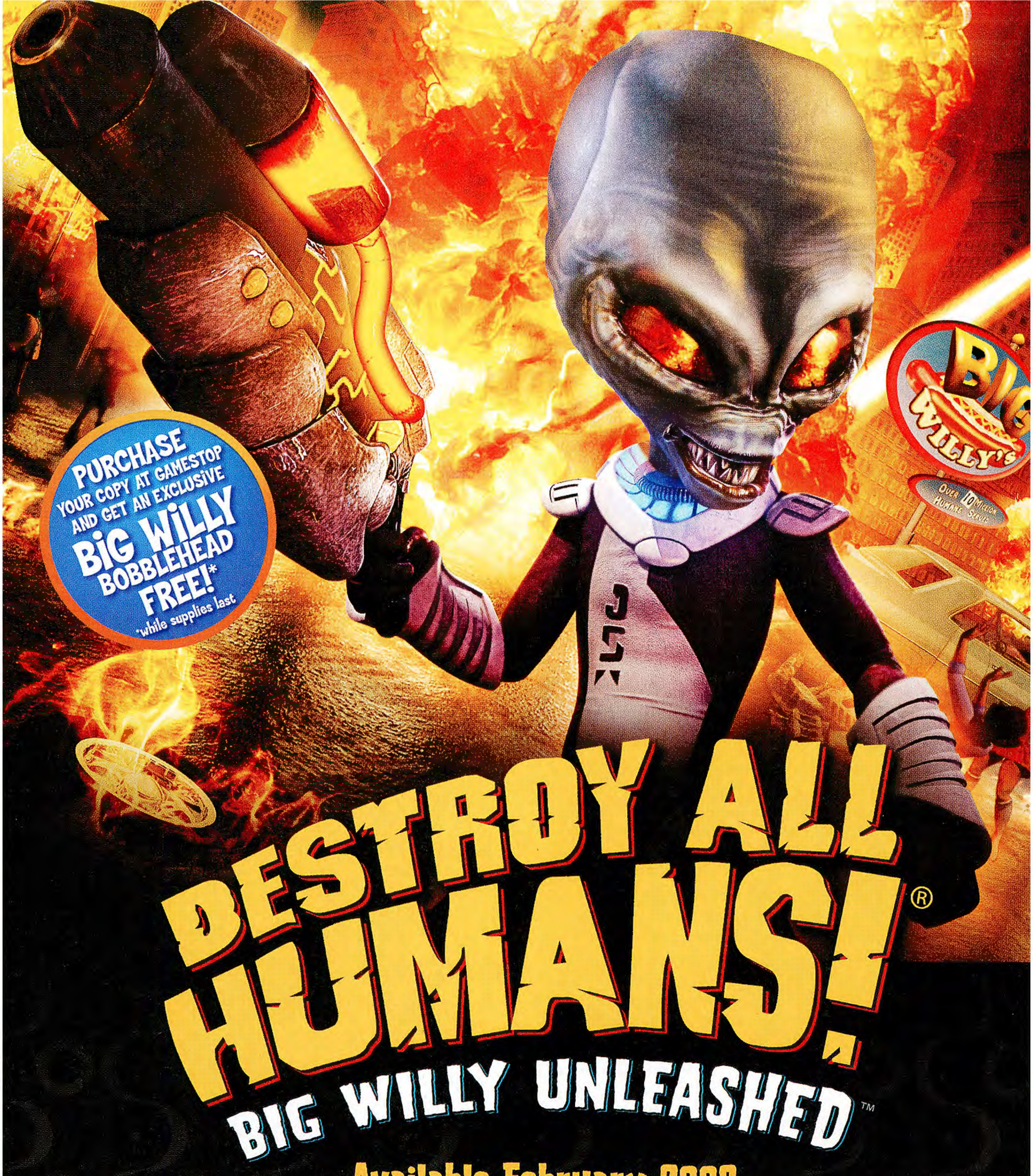

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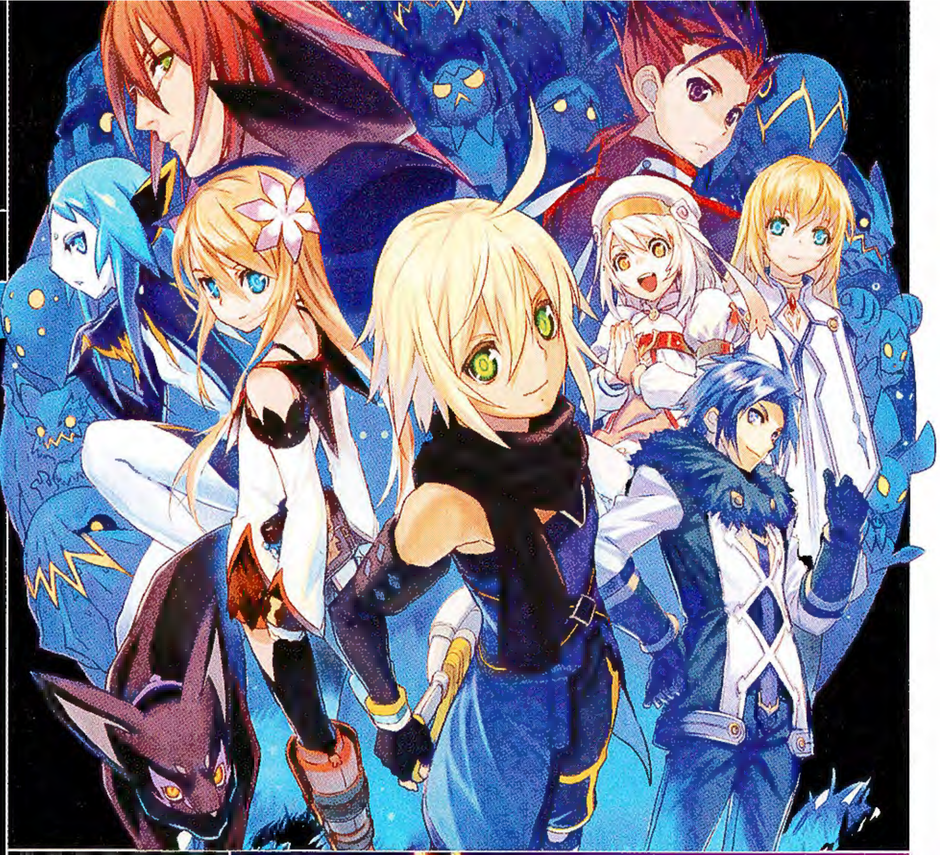

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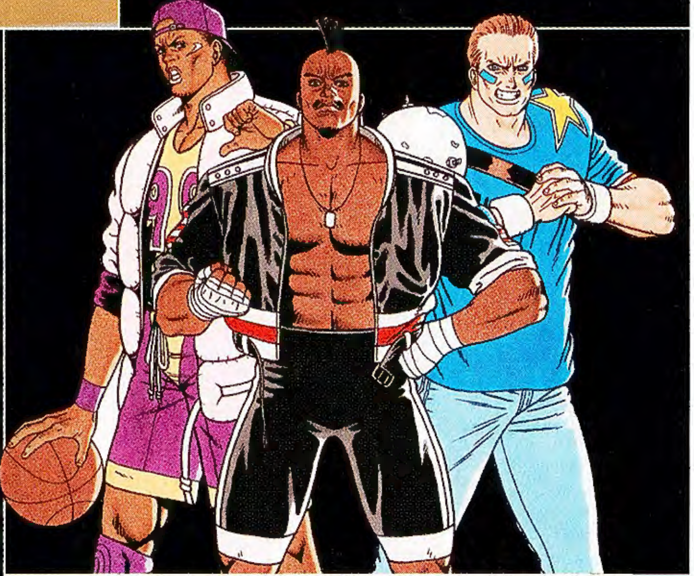

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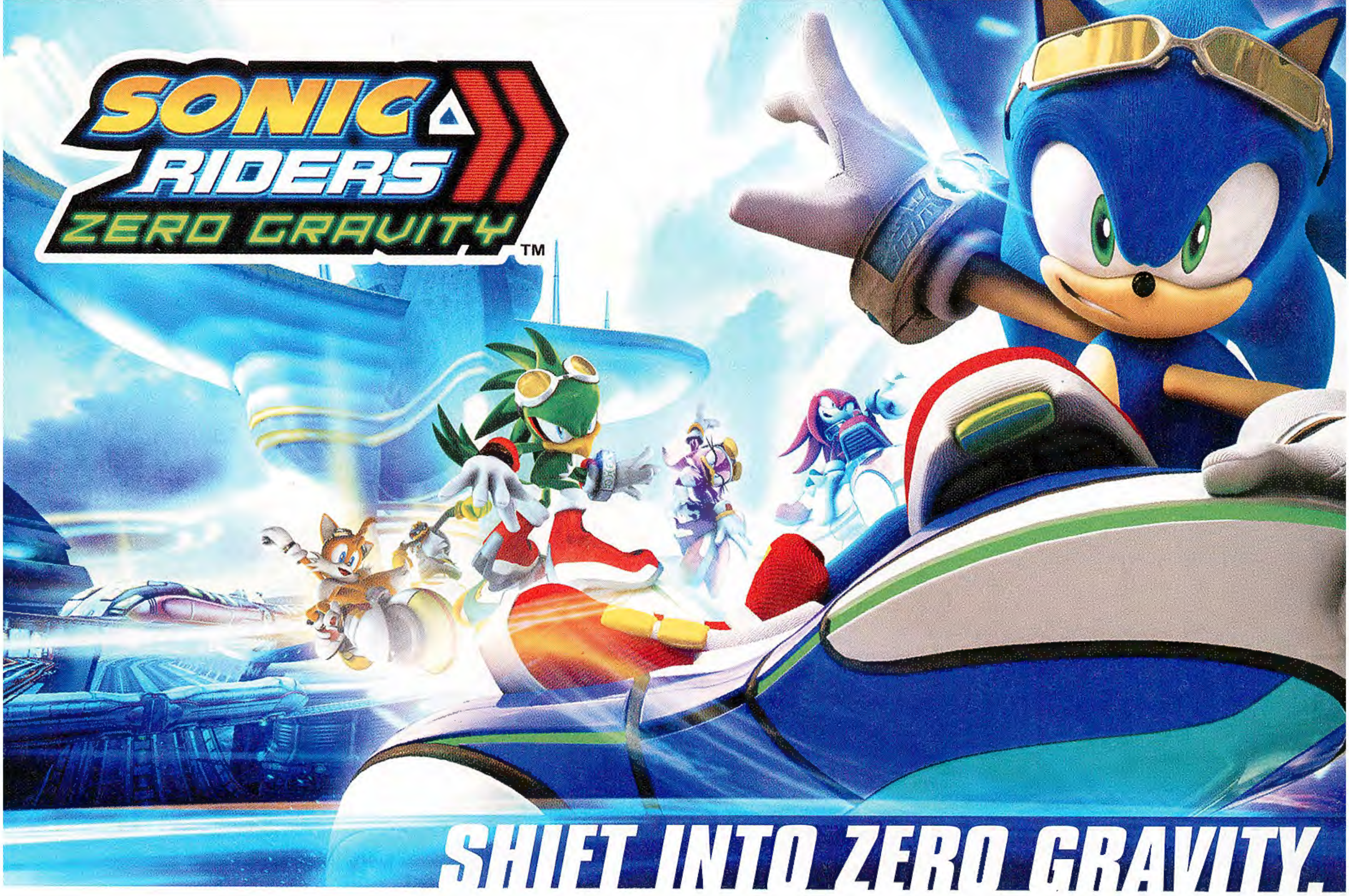
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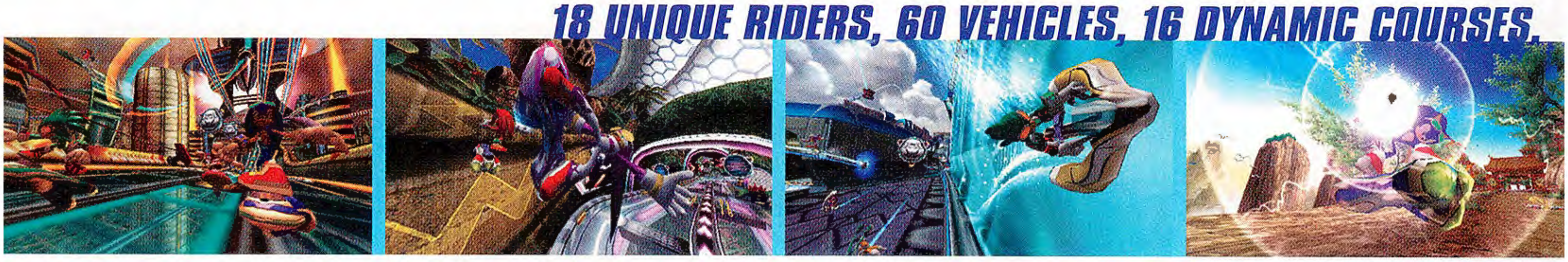

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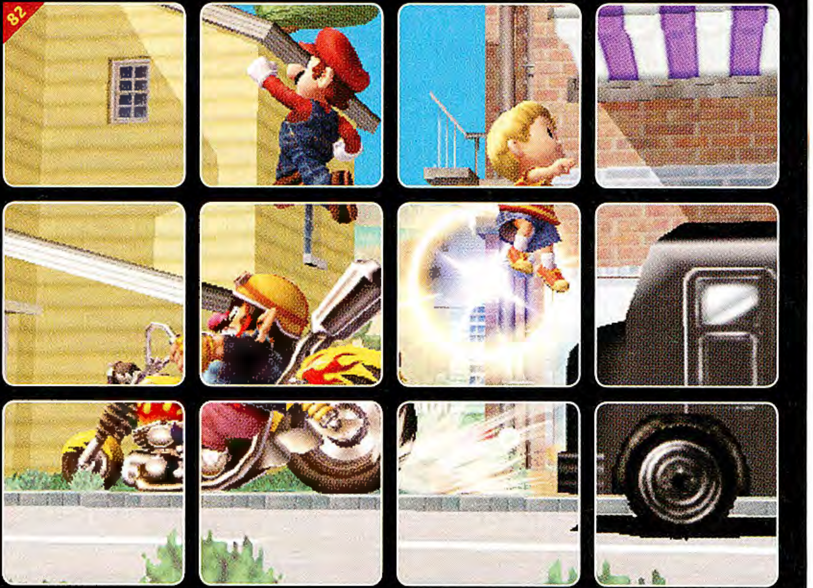

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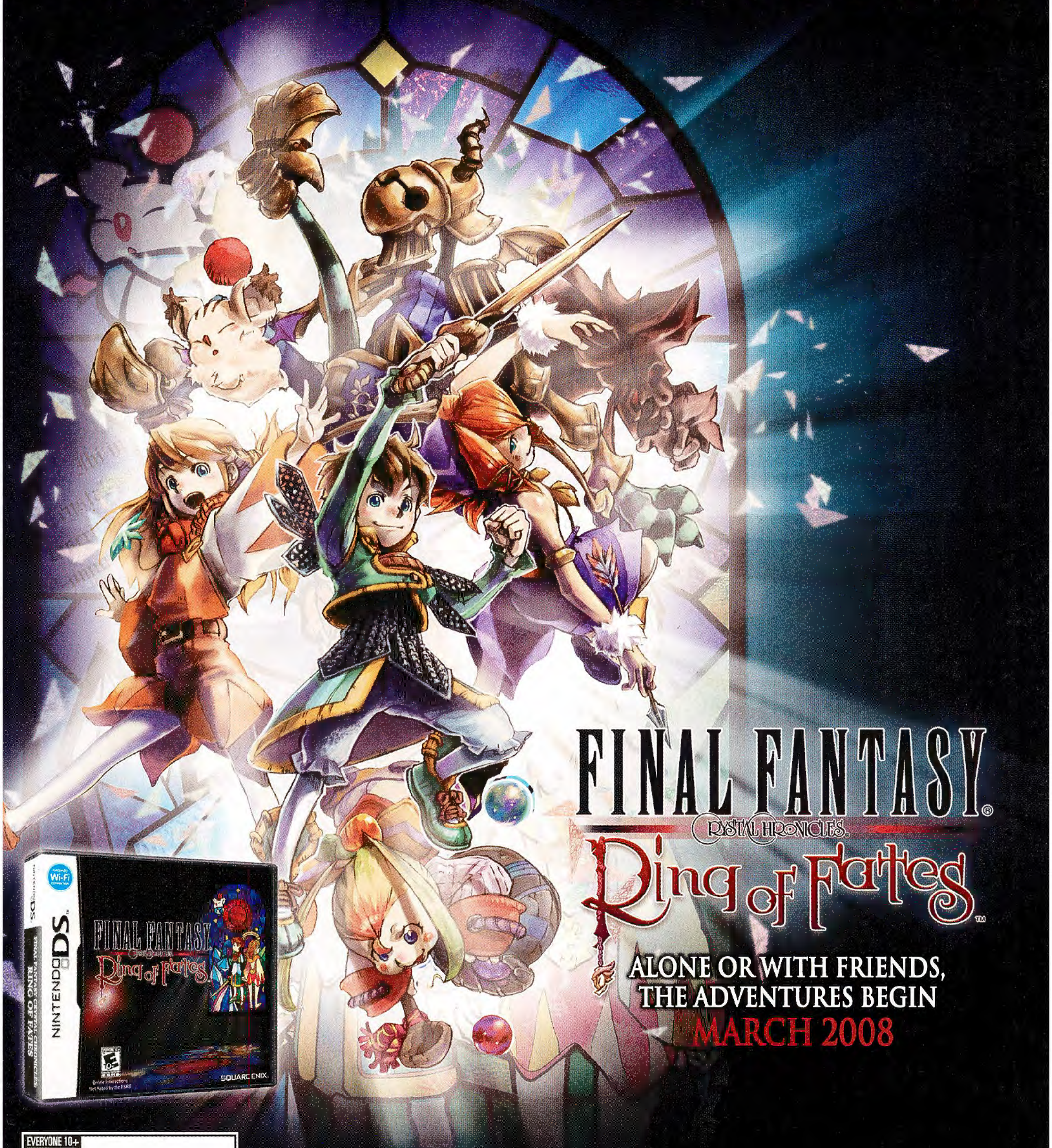
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii

ALL FATE BREAKS LOOSE.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Pulse

The Hits Just Keep on Coming

Twilight Princess, Metroid Prime 3, Super Mario Galaxy, and now Super Smash Bros. Brawl—in just over a year, Wii has hosted four of Nintendo's all-time best games. Coming out of the GameCube era, which produced Zelda and Mario titles that met with unusually mixed fan reaction, these recent Wii blockbusters have reestablished Nintendo's franchises at the very top of the gaming world. And the Wii edition of Mario Kart is right around the corner!

More and more, third-party publishers are also contributing amazing Wii titles. Case in point, Namco Bandai's Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World. Our cover game will give Wii its first epic RPG, with a deep combat system and a storyline that players can really sink their teeth into. At the opposite end of the gaming spectrum, Ubisoft's No More Heroes—reviewed this month—is a must-play title for mature gamers who prefer their action wild and relentlessly brutal.

But at the moment, I only have eyes for Super Smash Bros. Brawl. As you'll read in our first US review (pg.82), I can't recommend it highly enough. Pick up a copy and I'll see you online!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

[LETTERS]

Never let it be said that Chris Slate doesn't put Nintendo Power readers first. To answer your letters I've torn myself away from Super Smash Bros. Brawl—it's just sitting at the title screen, playing the Smash theme song over and over, calling to me like some siren's song. Well, maybe just one quick match before I start.... Okay, so that was 10 matches. I'd better get this show on the road before I lose what little willpower I've got left!

TRIFORCE TRIO

I made a graham cracker/gingerbread house at school. One of my friends suggested that I Zelda-ize it, and here is the result!

PRINCESS ZELDA FANATIC

I recently constructed a Triforce out of tropical-flavored Starburst candies. It took two whole bags with a total of 45 pieces.

ANONYMOUS

While I was walking outside, I spotted some ice chunks. I jumped on them and three pieces broke into triangles, so I made a Triforce. Here's a picture.

NOAH M.

There you have it, folks—another Nintendo Power exclusive! Everyone's heard of the Triforces of Wisdom, Power, and Courage, but only NP has the scoop on the Triforces of Gingerbread, Starbursts, and Ice Chunks!

AGREE TO DISAGREE

A few issues back, in a response to a letter, you implied that Mega Man 64 (more commonly known as Mega Man Legends) is no greater than the rest of the Mega Man games. How dare you. It may not have sold well, but it was a mass of innovation, and it had RPG and adventure elements not unlike those of the Legend of Zelda series, which you hold in such high regard. It also had a storyline that was quite interesting, and the cliffhanger at the climax of Legends 2 left many fans wanting a third installment. You noted that the games' Servbots, however, were one of the 20 greatest things about the Mega Man franchise, and for this, I thank you. But kindly reconsider your opinion that Legends deserves no greater recognition than any other Mega Man game.

GATZ

Who better to address your concerns than our resident Mega Man expert, Chris Hoffman? CHRIS H: We stand by our comment that Mega Man 64 isn't as good as many of the Mega Man titles, primarily since it lacks the cool defeat-boss-get-power hook that the best Mega Man games are known for. That doesn't mean we don't like the Legends games, though; we'd love to see a new entry in the series (which creator Keiji Inafune has hinted he'd like to make on numerous occasions).

BOARD GAMES

Will there be any other games besides Wii Fit that will be compatible with the Wii Balance Board?

NICHOLAS

Nintendo hasn't announced any, but my personal guess is that we'll see more titles make use of the board. I'd be surprised if, at the very least, we aren't able to use it as a skateboard or a snowboard at some point down the road.

FAIR WARNING

With Brawl coming out soon, I thought I should warn you that I am über at Smash Bros. So, if you play a dude through Wi-Fi who

totally kicks your butt (seriously, who can't beat you guys up?), it's probably some cool guy like me.
ZANCH
Since general online play is anonymous, I'll just say that anyone who beats you is me. You can't win!

DEEP FREEZE

I'm a huge Super Smash Bros. fan, so you can imagine how upset I was when I heard about the delay. Well, with me being the weird person that I am, I thought that I should freeze myself until the game comes out. The weird part is, this crossed my mind as a genuinely good idea for about a half second! Has anyone at NP had similar ideas to make the wait go by faster?
BONFIRE300
Well, Justin froze himself during the wait for Star Wars: Episode 1, Steve went into deep freeze for NiGHTS, and Hoffman took a turn in the cryo chamber waiting for the 25th Anniversary G.I. Joe figures, which recently came out. Wait a minute—that's where he's been! Whoops, I think I was supposed to thaw him out...I really should've put that on my calendar.

BAD GUYS NEED LOVE, TOO

If Mario has Peach and Luigi has Daisy, who do Wario and Waluigi have? Every man needs a woman!
ANONYMOUS
Whoa—back up there a minute. Does Daisy know that you're spreading these horrible rumors about her? As for Wario, I'd imagine that he'd have to give up garlic to land a lady, and that ain't gonna happen. And Waluigi...eew. Maybe Mother Brain?

WHAT ABOUT THE LITTLE GAMES?

I've noticed that the extra games that you don't have time to fully review are given a brief mention at the end of the review section. Can you clarify how you decide which games get put there?
DOUG W.

When you don't have enough space for reviews of less-important games, could you just give us a 1-10 rating? That way, we would have a general idea of the game's quality.
RUNEKEY
We base our review picks simply on what we feel our readers will be the most interested in. Unfortunately, we can't score every game because, even without writing a review, we simply don't have the time to play through them all.

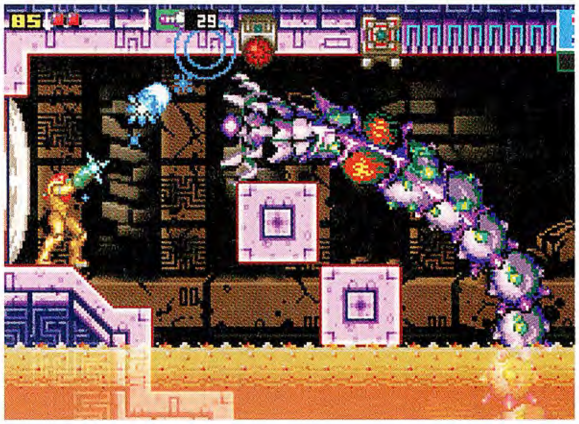
IT'S HARD BEING TOO AWESOME

I find myself beating video games too quickly. For example, I just bought Twilight Princess and I finished it in about three days. I felt like I didn't even enjoy the game! Has this ever happened to you?
PATRICK C
I know exactly what you mean, Patrick. I, too, am cursed with too much game-playing prowess. I also run too fast, jump too high, and am unfortunately saddled with the strength of 10 normal men. People like us just have to buck up and do our best to blend in with normal society.

POLLING PROBLEM

When I received Volume 224, I saw that it was time for the annual NP Awards that I enjoy so much. I immediately went to the website that you guys provided for us to vote. But when I got there, the polls were closed! I don't recall seeing anything in previous issues telling me to vote, but I could be wrong. What's up?
JOHN W.
John, I apologize to you and anyone else who wasn't able to join the thousands of people who cast their votes. We had to close the polls after a month to make this issue's deadline, and it seems that a few of you got the issue too late to join in. We'll work on a better solution for next year's voting.

Don't you think they should remake the old Game Boy game Metroid II: Return of Samus? I recently beat it and thought it was pretty good. As long as they improve the original's poor music, it should be a great game.
HENRY SG



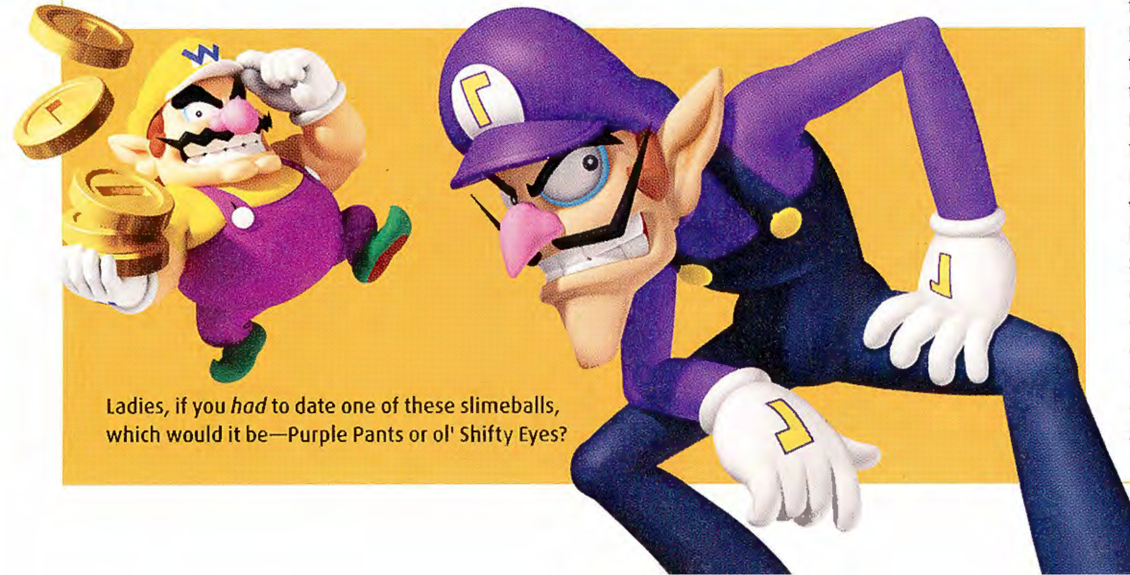
I wholeheartedly agree! I have the game but haven't played very far into it because of its monochrome graphics and lack of a map, both of which make navigating a massive world frustrating. A DS remake along the lines of GBA's stellar Metroid: Zero Mission (shown above) would make me one giddy gamer.

DON'T DRINK IT!

I was playing the shooting game in Wii Play the other day when I noticed the Wii soda can. I think Wii soda would be really cool—I know that I would sure drink some. What about you guys?
CHARLIE
Trust me, you want to stay far, far away from Wii Soda. Justin mixes it himself in his tub, and his secret ingredient is uncooked egg whites.

HIDDEN MEANING

I found the coolest thing in Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime. In the Flying Crawtress, the Plob air base, the second tank that you fight is named DQ: Swordz, and the caption below it says, "The Revolution is Coming!" I assume the developers were hinting at Dragon Quest Swords for Wii, which is pretty clever. P.S. I want to be called Slippy!
SLIPPY
Nice find! Since you technically didn't give us a name, I considered creating a humiliating title for you. But I couldn't come up with anything more embarrassing than Slippy, so you got your wish.



Ladies, if you *had* to date one of these slimeballs, which would it be—Purple Pants or ol' Shifty Eyes?

Nintendo Power used to include miniguides for Wii games like Metroid Prime 3: Corruption and Super Paper Mario. However, in the first three issues under new publisher Future US, the miniguides are nowhere to be found! Are they gone forever?

BRIAN S.

Very observant, Brian! In my personal opinion, miniguides are worthwhile only if we can offer you something special. Players looking for general tips and walkthroughs have so many other options, from stand-alone strategy books to online FAQs and guides, that there isn't much need for a few pages of basic tips in NP. However, when we can arrange to bring you brand-new information—for example, advanced tactics from a game's designers—that's worth doing. These opportunities aren't as common, but are much cooler when they happen. Those are my thoughts, anyway—I'd love to hear what everyone else thinks.

PLAY D'OH

I saw that less-than-excellent Mario hat made out of Play-Doh in Volume 224 and knew that I could do better. So, here's my rendition of Geometry Wars!

ANONYMOUS

Gah—what did you eat?! Oh, that's...that's Geometry Wars. Uh, that's really something! Keep up the...work!

DINO-MITE

This is my Yoshi, which I made from scratch. I know it's not perfect, but I'm only 11 and it's my first time sewing.

DONOVAN M.

Nice job! Thanks, Donovan, for restoring my faith in the creative skills of loyal NP readers. Hey, could you make a life-sized one of those for Thomason to wear around the office?

HERE KITTY, KITTY

This Christmas I got a Wii Zapper and a digital camera. Holding the Wii Zapper below the camera and looking at the view screen, it looks like a first-person game, like Metroid or Halo. I chased my cat around the house and made movies that I called Halo Kitty. Don't worry—I have other hobbies.

MICHAEL H.

Phew! I'm glad you cleared that up, because for a second there, I was worried.

THE NEFARIOUS HOARDER

My friend Mark bought Resident Evil 4 over a year ago, but he refuses to play it. What's my legal right here? Can I beat him up, take his consoles, and get him thrown in jail? He's got to be punished somehow! What would you guys do?

ROBB L.

Does he often refuse to play games that he's bought? Does he line them up on his shelf, fold his arms, and shout out, "Silly games, no one shall ever play you!" and then laugh manically? If so, we may be dealing with some kind of new anti-gaming supervillain. Tread carefully, Robb.

KIDS TODAY

The other day I watched my younger brother play as Mario against Peach in a Mario Party DS minigame in which the two must dodge soccer balls. Instead of helping the royal princess, he jumped on her head and stunned her so that she couldn't avoid being hit by the ball. I was dumbfounded. Harming a princess that I spent the last two decades of my life rescuing, for a measly 10 coins in a minigame? The same princess who, even after being kidnapped in Super Mario Galaxy, still sends you a letter with five 1-UP Mushrooms as a gift? Is this really what is becoming of today's youth?

W. KYLE H.

Hey—ask Toad, who Peach uses as a shield in Smash Bros., how innocent the princess is.

STATUE OF LIMITATIONS?

Did you guys have a good holiday? I got some pretty cool video game stuff this year, including an old mint-condition Super Mario RPG Player's Guide. I noticed in the credits that Scott Pelland was the senior writer/editor for the guide. Anyway, in the "Who's Who" section where it introduces you to Geno, the guide says, "...Mario would be satified if..." and satisfied is missing the 's'. Would that be Scott P.'s fault?

CODY S.

Here's a response from the legend himself—take it away, Scott!

SCOTT: My bad, Cody. I don't understand how I could miss that, and I'm sorry you were disatified as a result.

MYSTERY MUSIC

When my team wins in Wii Sports Tennis, I want to sing along with the musical notes that come out of my Miis' heads...but no real music can be heard. What song are the Miis singing to themselves?

ASHLYN H.

Nobody knows, but I like to think that it's "We Will Rock You."

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EDITOR IN CHIEF **Chris Slate**
EXECUTIVE EDITOR **Steve Thomason**
SENIOR EDITOR **Chris Hoffman**
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CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR **David Cooper**
646-723-5447, dcooper@futureus.com
ADVERTISING DIRECTOR - GAMES GROUP
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650-238-2474, rushijima@futureus.com
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR
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PRODUCTION
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PRODUCTION COORDINATOR **Larry Briseno**

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www.futureus-inc.com

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FUTURE PLC
30 Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England
www.futureplc.com
Tel +44 1225 442244
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NON-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roger Parry
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P.O. Box 5770
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STRATEGIC SUITE

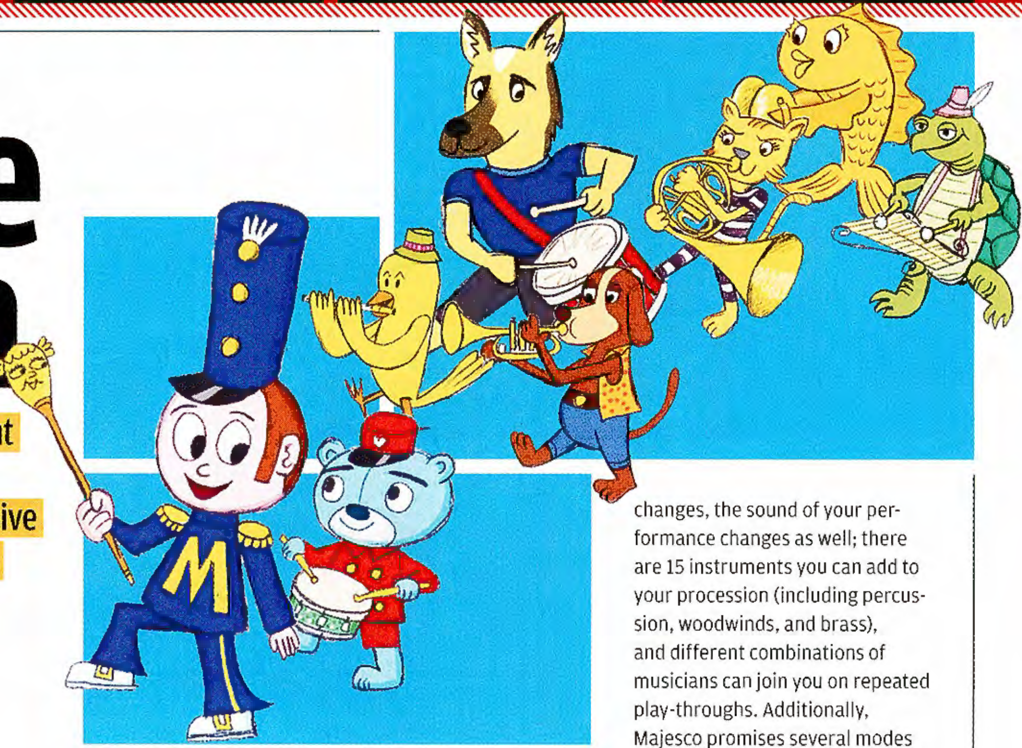
BACK TO THE TOMBS

DS GETS MYSTY

MAJOR LEAGUE

On the March

March to the beat of a different drummer in Major Minor's Majestic March, the Wii-exclusive music game from the creators of PaRappa the Rapper.

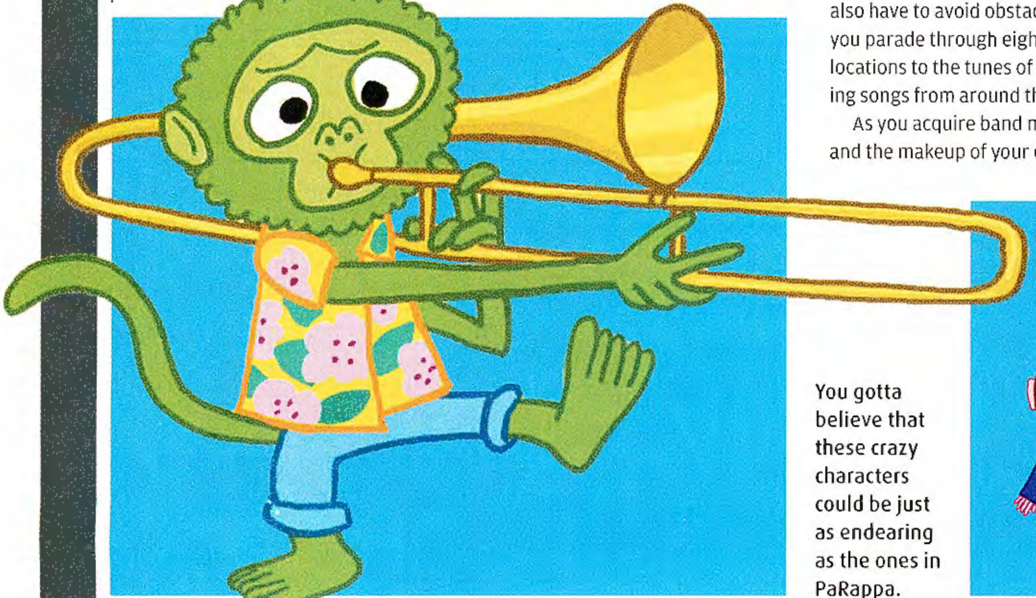


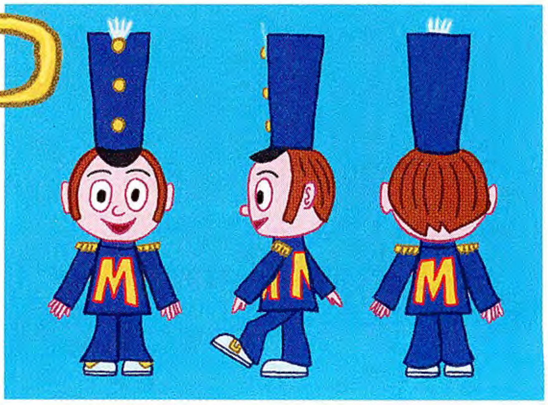
Weird, wild, and wonderful are words that could accurately describe the works of game designer/musician Masaya Matsuura and artist Rodney Alan Greenblat, the creators of revolutionary rhythm game PaRappa the Rapper. And judging by what's been revealed about their latest project, Major Minor's Majestic March, the same adjectives will likely apply.

Published by Majesco and developed by Matsuura's NanaOn-Sha studio, Major Minor's Majestic March is a rhythm game set in a town where marching bands are all the rage and most of the citizens are obsessed with becoming the best. Yet despite the fact that main character Major Mike Minor hails from a long line of famed drum majors, he's not very passionate about marching—at least, not until his parents present him with a magic baton that attracts band members and causes them to fall into step behind him. The Wii remote is the perfect tool to emulate the magic baton—during gameplay, you'll use it to maintain your tempo, recruit new band members, and pick up items. You'll also have to avoid obstacles as you parade through eight unusual locations to the tunes of 30 marching songs from around the world.

As you acquire band members and the makeup of your entourage changes, the sound of your performance changes as well; there are 15 instruments you can add to your procession (including percussion, woodwinds, and brass), and different combinations of musicians can join you on repeated play-throughs. Additionally, Majesco promises several modes of play, along with a baton-twirling minigame that takes place during intermissions.

Matsuura's music games always leave players tapping their toes, and as the concept art on this page illustrates, Greenblat's whimsical character designs are at their quirky best. The pair's latest endeavor sounds unusual to say the least, but so does a game about a rapping dog who's in love with a sunflower, and that turned out pretty well. We'll get to see if Major Minor's Majestic March lives up to our expectations toward the end of 2008. —CHRIS H.





You gotta believe that these crazy characters could be just as endearing as the ones in PaRappa.

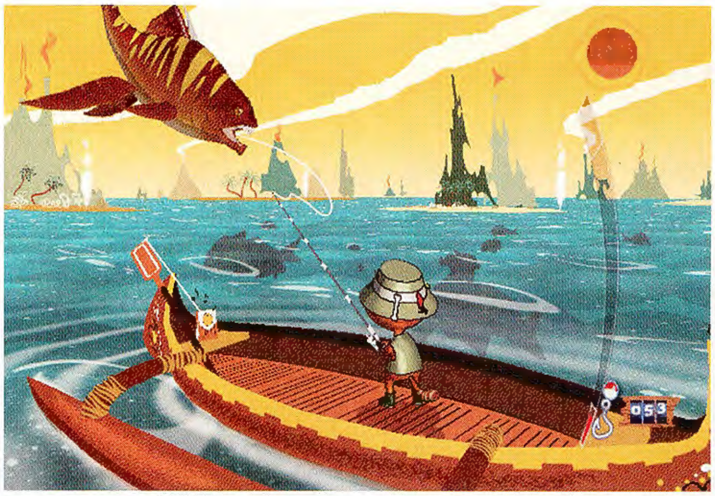
GO FISH

Quite a Catch

Boring name, wild game—EA makes fishing fun with Catch of the Day on Wii and DS.

The Wii remote makes a great fishing pole in video games, but as in real life, fishing can be kinda...boring. Enter EA's Wii- and DS-exclusive Catch of the Day. Yes, it sounds mundane, but a surreal, imaginative, *exciting* fishing game hides beneath the surface.

With the Wii remote in hand, casting is as easy as holding down the B Button and flicking your wrist. Waggle the remote and press the B Button to start reeling or press the A Button to give the line some slack. Alternatively, you can press the nunchuk's stick down and up, or turn the nunchuk sideways and crank the whole thing forward and backward to achieve the same effect.



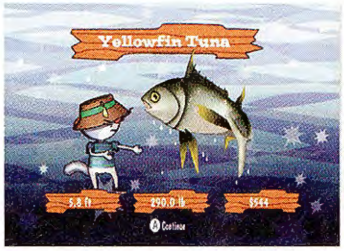
The classical music sets the mood, complementing the onscreen action. It reminds us of Disney's *Fantasia*.

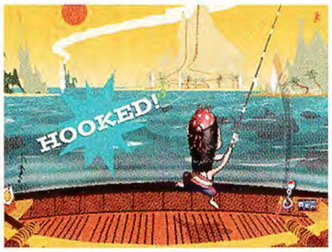
Depending on the lure (from worms to steaks to turkey legs to hamburgers—we told you it's not your average fishing game), you may have to do some fly-casting. Snap the line forward until it turns blue, then snap it back; repeat this action until the line is out as far as you want. Once you have a bite, you follow the onscreen prompts—whipping the Wii remote to the left or right—until you've caught the fish. You may also have to catch a smaller fish to attract an even larger one, which is just one example of the puzzle-like gameplay Catch of the Day offers.

There are some intense battles to catch the larger fish—and we're talking about leviathans weighing hundreds of pounds. Despite the way some of them look, most of the 140 fish are real, but some were made up—and some are just legendary, like, say, the Kraken. Yes, catching the mythical creature made famous by the 1981 film *Clash of the Titans* (not to be confused with the squidlike creature from the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies) is one of many epic "boss battles" in this fishing game.

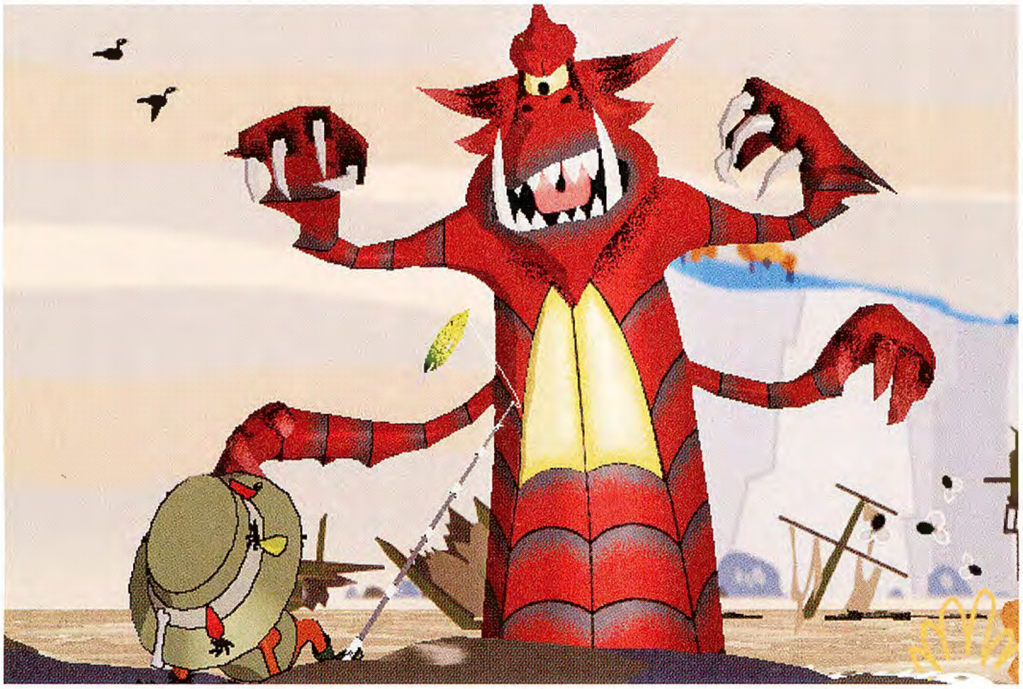
You have some tools at your disposal to aid you in your fishing adventure, such as the fish finder, which has you use the Wii remote like a flashlight to see the fish under the water. This device is also available in the DS version—in fact, the two versions are almost identical in content. The major differences are the graphics and the controls, with the DS version using the touch screen for most everything à la The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass. Both versions support multiplayer for up to four people.

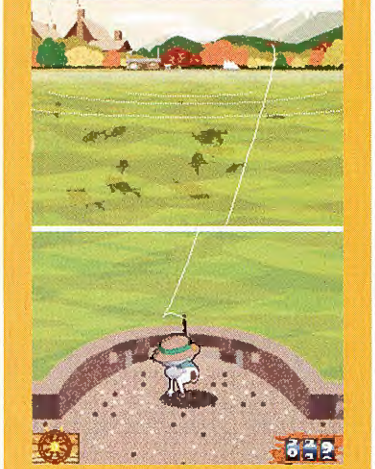
With Catch of the Day, EA has made a fishing game unlike any other. Stay tuned for more as the game nears its June release.
—JUSTIN C.





Choose from 10 different characters, including a cat [above left], a pirate, and a robot! [Below] Catching the Kraken won't be easy.





FISHING TO GO
The DS and Wii versions are very similar, except for the controls: swipe up on the touchscreen to cast, then tap anywhere on the screen to start reeling the line in.

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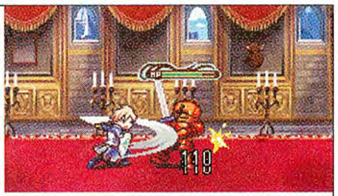
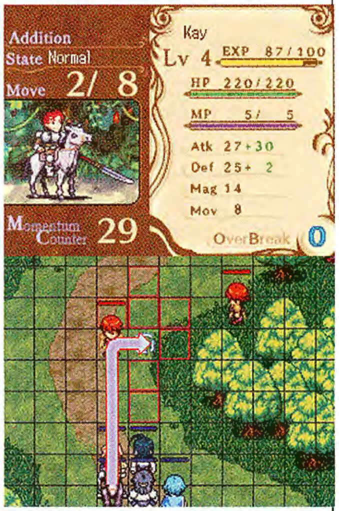
STEEL SONATA

A New Tune

Atlus's Rondo of Swords brings some fresh tactics to the strategy arena.

The localization specialists at Atlus continue their prolific support of the DS with yet another acquisition: Rondo of Swords from developer Success. Due sometime in the spring, this strategy RPG will give armchair generals a bevy of new tactical options to consider. For example, planning each character's movement takes on extra import as, rather than attack during a separate phase, your fighter simply strikes every enemy in his path. And just because a combatant isn't involved in the battle at hand doesn't mean he should slack off. Inactive allies can be sent on errands to improve their skills, find new weapons, or restock your force's provisions. The game also features a branching storyline with multiple endings; you must decide what you're willing to sacrifice in order to complete your mission, and that choice determines what kind of character your protagonist will ultimately become. Consider us intrigued. —STEVE T.





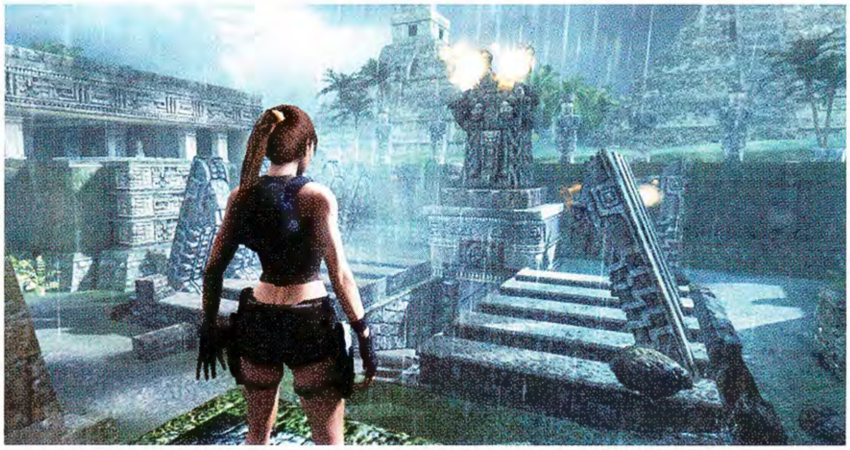
If your attacker's route passes through an ally, he'll receive a support bonus depending on his compatriot's skills.

8 IN '08

Into the Wild

It's Lara against the world as gaming's first lady journeys to some of her most treacherous destinations yet in Tomb Raider: Underworld.

Later this year, everyone's favorite tomb-raiding heiress returns to Wii with an all-new adventure that places the focus on Lady Croft's sometimes-contentious relationship with her surroundings. In Tomb Raider: Underworld (developed by the franchise's recent stewards at Crystal Dynamics), the terrain is a hostile and unpredictable adversary far more dangerous than any living creature. Platforming and puzzle-solving remain at the heart of the adventure, but the aim is to have everything feel more organic than in previous games. That includes how the environment affects Lara; our heroine will get dirty as she crawls through the mud then be rinsed clean as a rain shower passes by. Wii-specific features have yet to be revealed (ditto screen shots), but keep watching these pages for the full scoop in the coming months. —STEVE T.



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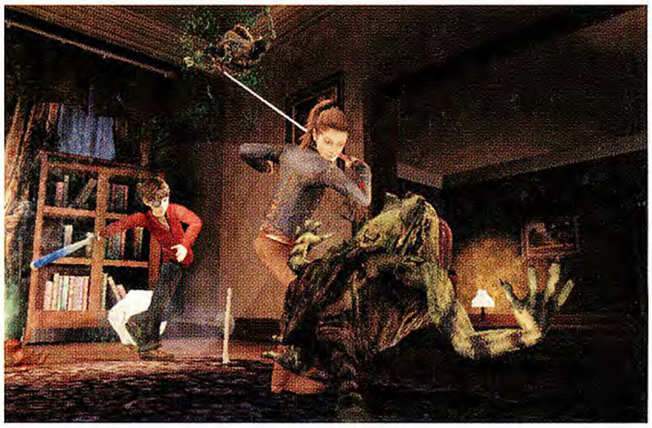
CHRONIC-WHAT-CLES

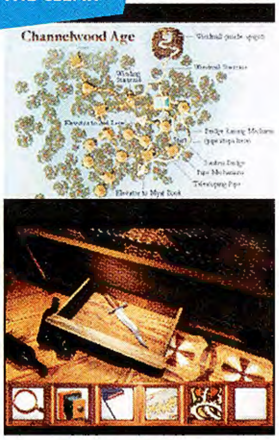
Spider Kids

Join the Grace kids as they explore the Spiderwick estate in Sierra's Wii and DS adaptation of *The Spiderwick Chronicles*.

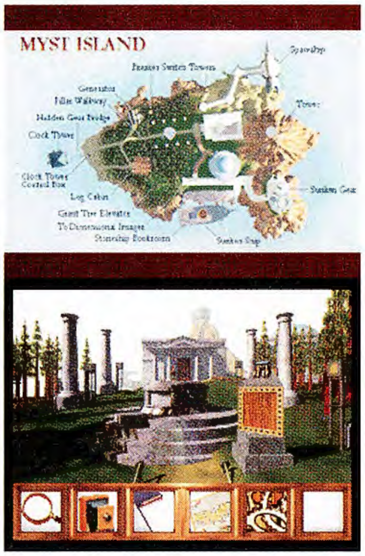


Following the success of the Harry Potter films, several children's books have had silver-screen adaptations—the most recent of which is writer Holly Black and illustrator Tony DiTerlizzi's *The Spiderwick Chronicles*. The film stars Freddie Highmore (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*) as twins Jared and Simon Grace, and Sarah Bolger (*In America*) as Mallory Grace, three kids who discover faeries around their new home, the Spiderwick Estate. No word on whether the actors will reprise their roles for publisher Sierra and developer Stormfront Studios's video game based on the film, but all three of the Grace siblings are playable—as is Thimbletick the Brownie at certain points—and each character has unique abilities to aid in both the fighting and puzzle-solving. The gameplay seems focused on accessibility, with context-sensitive combat and environment interaction, as well as some two-player minigames. The Spiderwick Chronicles should hit store shelves in February. —JUSTIN C.

IN THE CLEAR



It's a start, but where am I going to find steak sauce on this godforsaken island?



Back to the Island

Empire Interactive is set to fascinate a whole new generation of fans with Myst for DS.

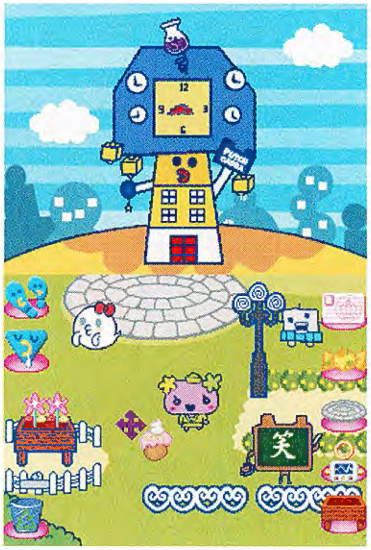
Merely hearing about Myst DS makes me shudder. I can't remember how many classes I skipped in college because I was playing Myst on my PC. If only I'd had Myst for DS when I was in school...I could have brought it with me to that awful astronomy class I took. I'm sure that would've helped my grade.

Myst for DS isn't just a shrunken version of the PC game, however: the handheld game includes all kinds of new features to help explore the puzzle-filled island. You'll have a camera and notebook to record places you've been, as well as a magnifying glass to zoom in on clues. Don't think that all these aids will help you breeze through the game, however—new challenges abound in the DS iteration. And in addition to all the new content, the music and video scenes have been completely remastered. —CHRIS SH.

CONNECT THREE

Shopaholics Unite

Namco Bandai continues to corner the market for saccharine-sweet shop sims with the third go-round of its Tamagotchi Connection Corner Shop series.



With simply drawn characters and bright colors reminiscent of PaRappa the Rapper (also from developer NanaOn-Sha), Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop has carved a deep niche for itself on the DS. The just-announced third installment features the usual slate of touch-controlled minigames centered around a shop-owning theme, this time with a dozen new businesses, such as a bakery, an ice-cream parlor, and a party store. The game also offers fan favorite Violetchi as a playable character for the first time, and a park where you can commune with the Tamagotchi populace, plant flowers, and develop a tranquil setting. The game's other activities are anything but tranquil, asking you to please irate customers, calm crying babies (by singing into the handheld's microphone), and search vast expanses for dinosaur bones. Expect the game to arrive at a corner shop near you later this year. —GEORGE S.

GAME WATCH FORECAST

We all know many of you only care about Super Smash Bros. Brawl, but check out 2008's other offerings. There seems to be something for everybody!

Wii		
Active Life: Outdoor Challenge	Namco Bandai	SUM 08
Agatha Christie And Then There Were None	DreamCatcher Games	2/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	3/08
Balloon Pop	UFO Interactive	2/08
Baroque	Atlus	2/08
BlastWorks: Build, Trade, Destroy	Majesco	5/08
Boom Blox	Electronic Arts	SUM 08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	2/08
Bully: Scholarship Edition	Rockstar Games	3/08
Castle of Shikigami III	Aksys	4/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Cocoto Magic Circus	Conspiracy Entertainment	Q1 08
Cooking Mama Cook Off 2	Majesco	6/08
de Blob	THQ	6/08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	SUM 08
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	THQ	3/08
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
The Dog Island	Ubisoft	5/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	SPR 08
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	Square Enix	2/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Dream Pinball 3D	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Emergency Heroes	Ubisoft	3/08
Emergency Mayhem	Codemasters	4/08
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Ford Racing Off Road	Empire Interactive	6/08
Garfield Gets Real	DSI Games	2/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra Entertainment	TBA
Go, Diego, Go!: Safari Rescue	2K Play	2/08
Heavenly Guardian	UFO Interactive	3/08
The House of the Dead 2&3: Return	Sega	SPR 08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
Iron Man	Sega	5/08
Jumper	Brash Entertainment	2/08
Karaoke Revolution Presents: American Idol Encore	Konami	2/08
Kidz Sports Soccer	Destineer	2/08
King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	5/08
Kung Fu Panda	Activision	SPR 08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	SPR 08
Line Rider	InXille	SPR 08
London Taxi: Rush Hour	Destineer	2/08
Mario Kart Wii	Nintendo	SPR 08
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	Aksys	3/08
MLB 2K8	2K Games	SPR 08
The Monkey King: The Legend Begins	UFO Interactive	4/08
Monster Lab	Eidos	SUM 08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	FALL 08
MX vs. ATV Untamed	THQ	2/08
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
Myth Makers: Super Kart GP	Conspiracy	TBA
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
No More Heroes	Ubisoft	2/08
Obscure: The Aftermath	Ignition	3/08
Octopuzzle	Atlus/ Conspiracy	TBA
Okami	Capcom	3/08
Opoona	Koei	3/08
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	Crave	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	4/08
Rebel Raiders	XS Games	3/08
Runaway	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	6/08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	SPR 08
Sega Bass Fishing	Sega	2/08
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SUM 08
Summer Sports	Destineer	3/08
Super Pick Ups	XS Games	4/08
Super Smash Bros. Brawl	Nintendo	3/08
Target: Terror	Konami	3/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	TBA
Top Spin 3	2K Sports	SPR 08
Wall-E	THQ	6/08
We Love Golf	Capcom	TBA
Wii Fit	Nintendo	Q2 08
Wild Earth: African Safari	Majesco	4/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	6/08
Worms: A Space Oddity	THQ	3/08
WWII Aces	Destineer	2/08
Yamaha Supercross	DSI Games	2/08
NINTENDO DS		
1 vs. 100	DSI Games	5/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	3/08
Anno 1701: Dawn of Discovery	Ubisoft	2/08
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	Capcom	2/08
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	Ubisoft	2/08
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	Q2 08
Best of Tests DS	Conspiracy Entertainment	2/08
Brain Assist	Sega	2/08
Bratz: Super Babyz	THQ	2/08
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	3/08
Bubble Bobble Double Shot	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	Disney Interactive	5/08
Commando	XS Games	3/08
Crosswords DS	Nintendo	5/08
de Blob	THQ	Q1 08
Diary Girl	Konami	3/08
Dinosaur King	Sega	SUM 08
Disciples II	Strategy First	3/08
Disney Friends	Disney Interactive	3/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	Q2 08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Double Sequence	DSI Games	3/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Dream Pinball 3D	SouthPeak Interactive	2/08
Drone Tactics	Atlus	3/08
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	Hudson Soft.	2/08
Eco-Creatures: Save the Forest	Majesco	3/08
FIFA Street 3	Electronic Arts	2/08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	Square Enix	3/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	TBA
Garfield Fun Fest	DSI Games	5/08
Garfield Gets Real	DSI Games	2/08
Go Pets	Konami	3/08
Harvest Moon DS Cute	Natsume	3/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	6/08
Homie Rollerz	Destineer	2/08
Imagine: Figure Skater	Ubisoft	3/08
Insecticide	Gamecock Media Group	2/08
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	Aksys	5/08
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Videogame	LucasArts	Q2 08
Let's Ride: Friends Forever	THQ	3/08
Line Rider	InXile	SPR 08
Lost in Blue 3	Konami	3/08
M&M's Kart Racing	DSI Games	2/08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	Q2 08
My Horse and Me	Atari	2/08
My Life Coach	Ubisoft	3/08
Myst	Empire Interactive	3/08
Mysterious Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	Chunsoft	2/08
N+	Atari	3/08
Nanostray 2	Majesco	2/08
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	Tomy	3/08
New Zealand Story Revolution	Ignition Entertainment	2/08
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	Tecmo	3/08
Ninja Reflex	Electronic Arts	3/08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	TBA
Nintendo Crossword*	Nintendo	TBA
Organize It	Summitsoft	5/08
Paws & Claws: Pet Resort	THQ	2/08
Pet Shop	Ubisoft	3/08
Petz Bunnyz	Ubisoft	3/08
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	Ubisoft	2/08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	6/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Plushees	Destineer	3/08
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	Nintendo	Q2 08
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Time	Nintendo	Q2 08
Prey the Stars	Koei	3/08
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	Konami	3/08
Professor Branium's Games	Destineer	3/08
Professor Layton and the Curious Village	Nintendo	2/08
Project Exile	Graffiti Entertainment	3/08
Puppy Palace	Ubisoft	2/08
Quick Yoga Training	Ubisoft	4/08
Real Soccer 2008	Ubisoft	2/08
River King: Mystic Valley	Natsume	3/08
Robo-Revolt: Robocalypse Now	Vogster	SPR 08
Rondo of Swords	Atlus	4/08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sega Superstars Tennis	Sega	3/08
Shining Stars	DSI Games	6/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	4/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Spectrobes II	Disney Interactive	FALL 08
Speed Racer	Warner Bros. Interactive	5/08
The Spiderwick Chronicles	Sierra	2/08
Spitfire Heroes: Tales of the RAF	Destineer	2/08
Spore	Electronic Arts	TBA
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	SPR 08
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	Aksys	4/08
Suzuki Super-Bikes II: Riding Challenge	Jack of All Games	2/08
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	Namco Bandai	SUM 08
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys	Ignition	4/08
Viva Pinata DS	TBA	TBA
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wild Petz: Tigerz	Ubisoft	2/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
The World Ends With You	Square Enix	TBA
Yamaha Supercross	DSI Games	2/08
Zoo Tycoon II	THQ	2/08

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE *TENTATIVE TITLE

BITS OF TID

Crazy '08

Nintendo announces the '08 lineup for Wii and DS.

In a recent press release about continuing Nintendo's momentum into 2008, there was a partial lineup of some upcoming first- and third-party Wii and DS titles (which were added to the Game Watch Forecast). Of particular interest to us is Bangai-O Spirits for DS—the original Bangai-O is still a staff favorite.

Get Smashed at GDC

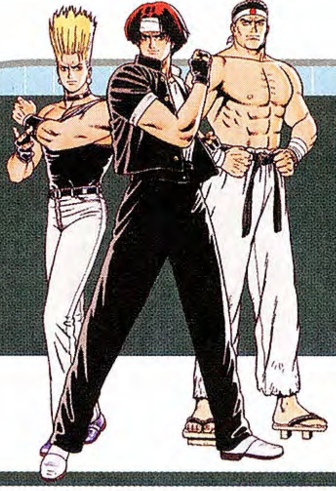
Sakurai to give Brawl post-mortem at Game Developers Conference.

Though Nintendo has no plans for a keynote address at this year's GDC (to be held in February), three of the company's developers will give presentations at the conference. Masahiro Sakurai will look back on the development of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, Takao Sawano will discuss Wii Fit, and Takashi Aoyama will talk about WiiWare.

Taking the Cake Again

Majesco announces Cake Mania 2 for DS. Sweet!

Who doesn't love cake? Nobody. That's why Majesco is bringing Cake Mania 2, the sequel to last year's point-and-click arcade-style baking game, to DS. The game will feature more than 50 kitchen upgrades and 200 levels, plus a branching storyline with multiple endings.



Hail to the King

Things are a little quiet on the Virtual Console front, but there's still some fine gaming to be had, including NeoGeo gem King of Fighters '94.

10

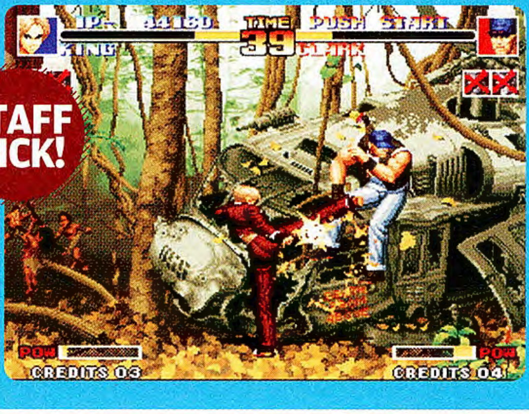
VC Games

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

VIRTUAL CONSOLE FEATURED PICK

KING OF FIGHTERS '94

STAFF PICK!



PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **SNK/D4**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1994**

Justin C's Pick

While the '90s were the era of Street Fighter and Mortal Kombat, I've always held a special place in my heart for King of Fighters. The first in the series, King of Fighters '94 introduced the three-man team and brought together characters from some of SNK's other games (even if the countries these characters represented didn't always make sense). Though the game may not have the instant accessibility of, say, Street Fighter II, fighting fans should give KOF '94 a shot.

BLADES OF STEEL

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

WHAT: A fast-paced hockey game in which a fight breaks out approximately every 30 seconds.

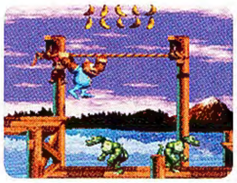
WHY: For those who enjoy a bit of hockey with their fisticuffs, this is the best representation of the sport the 8-bit era had to offer. Controls are solid, the action moves quickly, and unlike in modern hockey sims, you can sucker-punch your opponent without fear of consequences. —ST

BUBBLE BOBBLE

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **TAITO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

WHAT: Two bubble-spouting dinosaurs try to make their way through more than 100 levels.

WHY: When it was released, Bubble Bobble was one of the best multiplayer experiences on the NES. Two decades later it still provides some of the best cooperative gaming around. The fact that it's pretty easy to pick up and play doesn't hurt either. —JC



DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 3: DIXIE KONG'S DOUBLE TROUBLE

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1996**

WHAT: The third (and last) chapter of Rare's wildly popular series of prerendered platformers, DKC3 starred Dixie Kong and her pajama-wearing cousin, Kiddy Kong.

WHY: In spite of the series' increasingly lame character designs, DKC3 is a solid platformer packed with secrets. —CH

SCORE
LEVEL

PAC-ATTACK

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

WHAT: In this Tetris-inspired block-dropping puzzle game, your aim is to clear lines and arrange ghosts so they can be consumed by a voracious Pac-Man.

WHY: Pac-Attack offers an interesting twist on a familiar formula. Setting up combos by devouring ghosts adds an extra layer of challenge, and multiple modes (including versus play) will keep puzzle fans playing. —CH

RIOT ZONE

PLATFORM: TURBOGRAFX CD
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1993

WHAT: Punch, jump-kick, and throw your way through five levels as you battle the Dragon Zone syndicate. Although the game is single-player only, you can choose from two characters, one of whom has a special break-dancing attack.

WHY: Because you've already beaten Final Fight and Streets of Rage, and Double Dragon ain't on VC yet. Fans of beat-'em-ups should enjoy it. —CH

ROLLING THUNDER 2

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1991

WHAT: A side-scrolling run-'n'-gun game with a couple of twists: a slower pace and limited ammo mean you're not afforded the luxury of shooting all willy-nilly, which adds to the old-school challenge.

WHY: Rolling Thunder 2 is definitely tough, but sharing the experience with a friend can be entertaining for a while. —JC

STARTROPICS

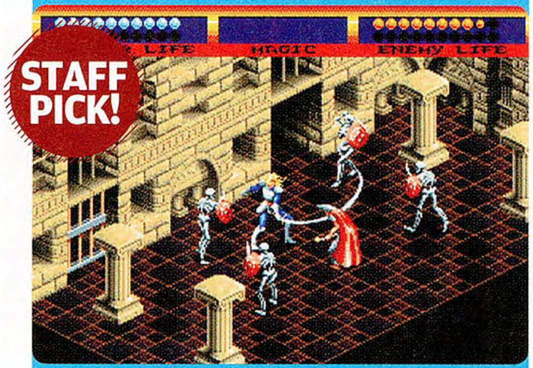
PLATFORM: NES
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: ADVENTURE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1990

WHAT: This unusual adventure game found a place in many gamers' hearts due to its contemporary setting (weapons include yo-yos and baseball bats), quirky sense of humor, and "Zelda-lite" gameplay.

WHY: To see what the fuss was all about. Although StarTropics doesn't hold up as well as some 8-bit games, its unique features still resonate with die-hard fans. —CH

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICK!



LIGHT CRUSADER

Steve T's Pick

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
GENRE: ADVENTURE
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1995

Treasure's first foray into the role-playing realm is a strange duck. Despite its Japanese origins, the game adheres much more closely to Western sensibilities. In fact, the dungeon-heavy gameplay is reminiscent of Diablo more than anything else. Though certainly not Treasure's best effort, Light Crusader is a unique and oft-overlooked piece of studio history that's worth checking out for fans.

STAFF PICK!

TOP HUNTER

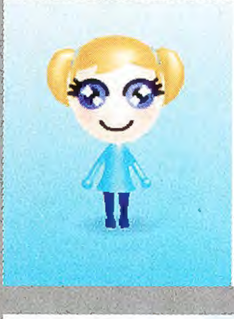
PLATFORM: NEOGEO
PUBLISHER: SNK/D4
GENRE: ACTION
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

WHAT: With its comical enemies, detailed animation, and rideable vehicles, Top Hunter feels like a spiritual precursor to Metal Slug. The gameplay revolves around grabbing and throwing enemies, however, not shooting.

WHY: Unique, fun play mechanics (like hopping between two planes) set Top Hunter apart from other NeoGeo games, and co-op play is icing on the cake. —CH

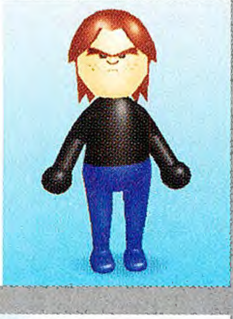
Check 'Em Out

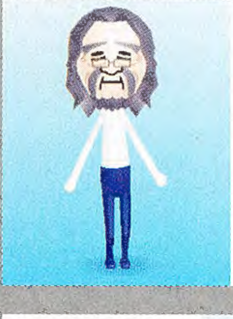
The Check Mii Out Channel continues to be a big hit with creative Wii users by providing them with an outlet to show the world their Mii-making talents. Contests in recent weeks have spanned a wide variety of themes, from game-based to holiday-oriented. Be sure to visit the Check Mii Out Channel to vote for your favorites.



The Girl with the Bubbly Personality
We had no idea what to expect when Nintendo put out the call for a girl with a bubbly personality. That's why Derek won and we didn't.

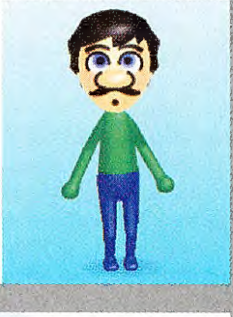
The Biggest Bully Ever
Three ingredients for a stereotypical bully—freckles, a grimace, and a big, protruding jaw—are prominant in T-boy's winning entry.

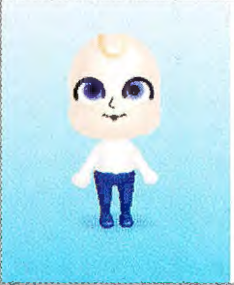




Father Time
If it hadn't been for Colleen's winning entry, we never would have known that Father Time was an aging hippie. But that's cool, man, that's cool.

Luigi without His Cap
Eirn's Luigi actually came in second place, but we liked him better than the first-place winner due to his appropriately stylin' mustache.





New Year's Baby
A creative cooing mouth and a clever approximation of hair helped take G. Ganoo's New Year's baby to the top.

PRE-VIEW

MARCH '08

You'll find trouble and paradise in this month's oddball preview mix.

Active Life: Outdoor Challenge Pg. 29
Baroque Pg. 26
Castle of Shikigami III Pg. 24
de Blob Pg. 22
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire Pg. 23
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures Pg. 23
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MiniCopter: Adventure Flight Pg. 24
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Summer Sports: Paradise Island Pg. 30
Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys! Pg. 28

True Colors

> DE BLOB

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **BLUE TONGUE** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

de Blob has a come a long way from its humble origins as a student project at Utrecht University in the Netherlands to evolve into one of THQ's most promising and innovative games for Wii. In fact, it keeps looking better every time we see it.

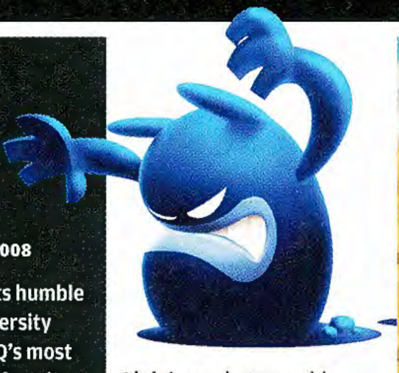
As readers of our previous de Blob coverage may know, the game is set on a monochromatic alien world ruled by the evil INKT Corporation, and it's up to you, as the heroic Blob, to restore color by applying paint to buildings, trees, bridges—you name it. The gameplay is fairly open-ended; ultimately, you need only acquire a certain number of points to proceed through each level, and how you do that is up to you.

You can simply roam around the game world (using the Control Stick on the nunchuk), painting structures and obtaining combo multipliers as you flick the Wii remote to jump from wall to wall while restoring Chroma City to its former glory. Or you can accept minimission challenges from your resistance cohorts to build up your score. Four types of challenges are available: painting (which requires you to paint certain objects particular colors), racing (platforming-oriented tasks in which you have to get from point A to point B within a time limit), combat (defeating specific enemies), and sabotage (missions in which you must obtain a quantity of a certain color to hop inside a building, after which you shake the remote and nunchuk to destroy it).

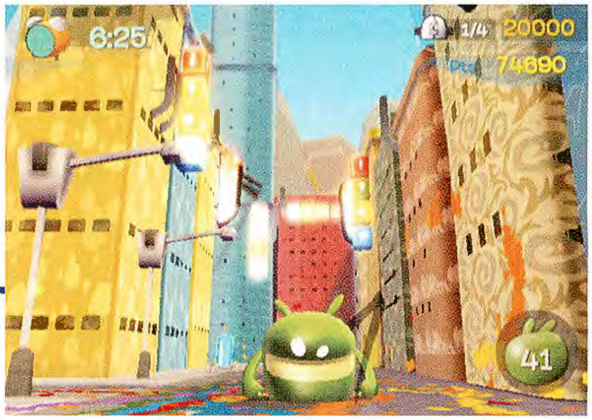
As you restore color to the game's 10 main stages (including uptown, downtown, a resort, Chroma City Fun Park, the Chroma Dam, the docklands, and a place called Guggentraz Island), the world springs to life: the music becomes richer, louder, and more lively, and the citizens, called Raydians, appear in the streets to celebrate (and you can paint them, too). You can make new colors by mixing different types of paint, but be sure not to run out; a counter in the corner of the screen keeps track of your paint supply.

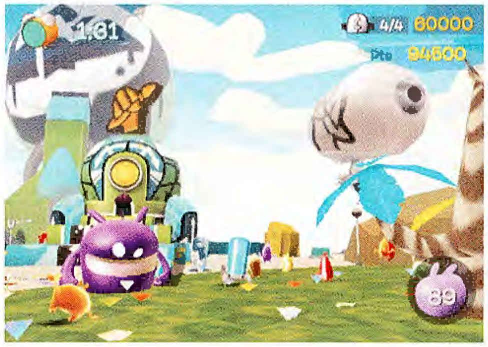
Nor surprisingly, the INKT Corporation's police goons are out to stop you, often by spraying you with black ink. When you're covered in ink, your life drains and you cause harm to surfaces you try to paint, so it's best to clean yourself off with a nearby water source. Fortunately, a lock-on homing attack (activated by holding the Z Button and flicking the remote) makes short work of most foes.

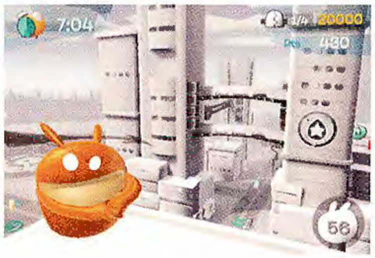
On top of the regular stages, de Blob features 20 tough Sprint Challenge levels, plus a multiplayer mode that includes several variants. —CHRIS H.



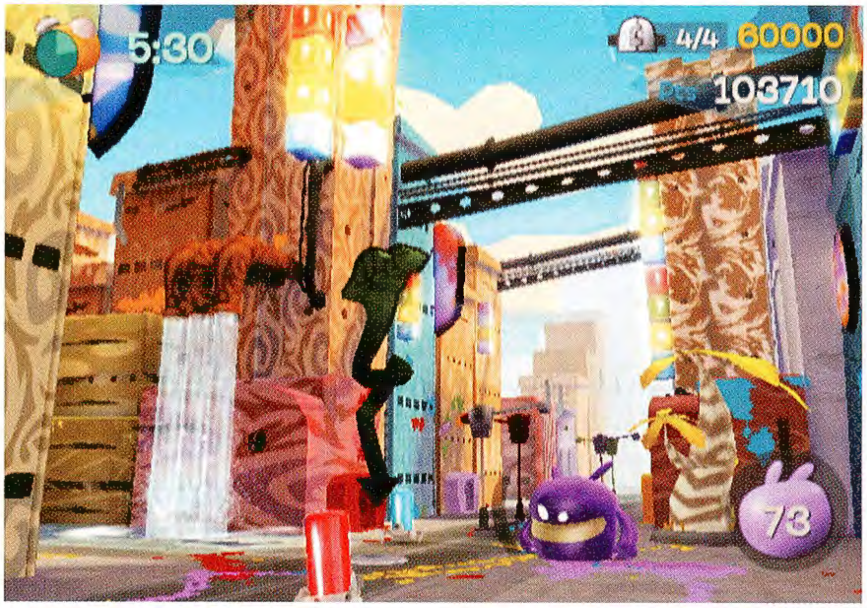
Blob is ready to rumble. He'll paint you senseless if you get in his way.

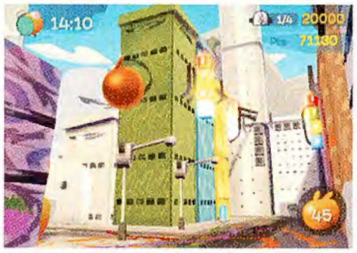




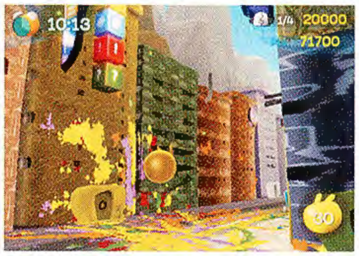


Chroma City starts out monochromatic and bleak. It's up to you to restore the city to colorful life.





Levels begin bursting with sound and color as you paint everything in your path.

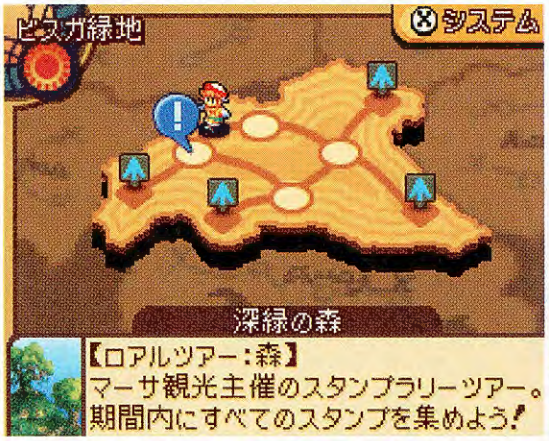


Don't Open That Book!

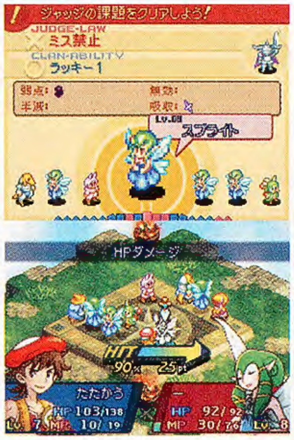
> FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2: THE SEALED GRIMOIRE

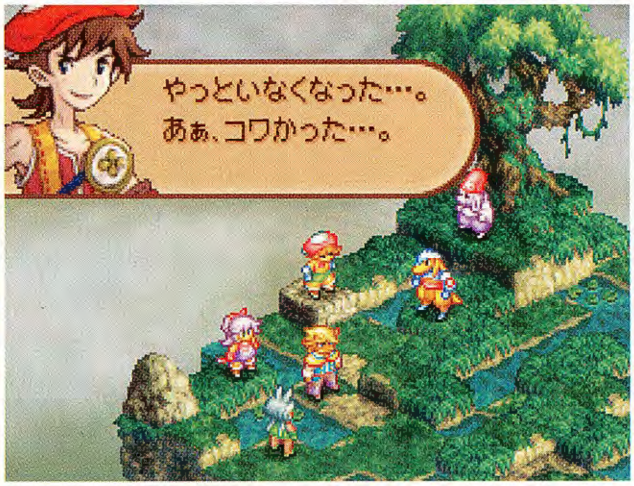
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX** • RELEASE: **TBD**

Though not yet officially announced for North American release, Final Fantasy Tactics A2 recently hit stores in Japan, carrying on Square Enix's tradition of strategic turn-based excellence. The game opens much like FF Tactics Advance, with main character Luso starting out in the "real world" before getting sucked into the world of Ivalice through a mysterious blank book he discovers in the school library. In Ivalice he joins up with a clan leader named Cid to explore the new world and find his way home. Unlike in Tactics Advance, however, the Ivalice in A2 is not a dream world, and since it's part of the Ivalice Alliance many familiar faces (such as Vaan and Penelo from FFXII) will show up in the game. Battles feel similar to those in Tactics Advance, with Judges setting the rules of engagement. New jobs, races, and abilities give you much more control over your characters than Tactics Advance did, though, and with its excellent art and music A2 sets itself apart from its predecessor. —TOM H.



【ロアルツアー：森】
マーサ観光主催のスタンプラリーツアー。
期間内にすべてのスタンプを集めよう！





やっといなくなった…。
あぁ、コワかった…。

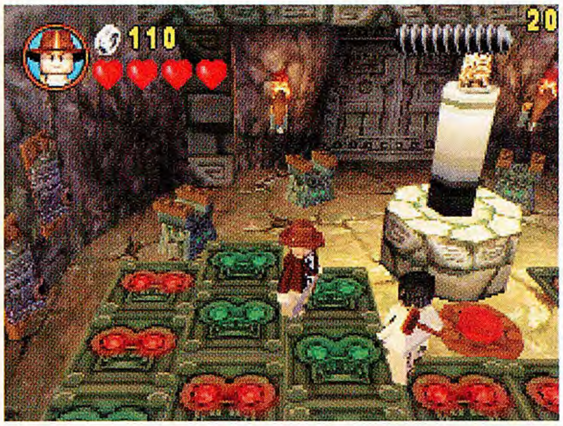
Tactics A2 retains the light-hearted tone of its GBA predecessor, as opposed to the serious political intrigue of the PlayStation original.

You Call This Archeology?

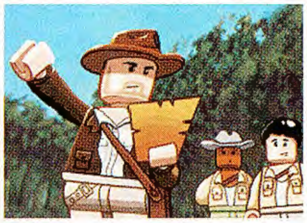
> LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

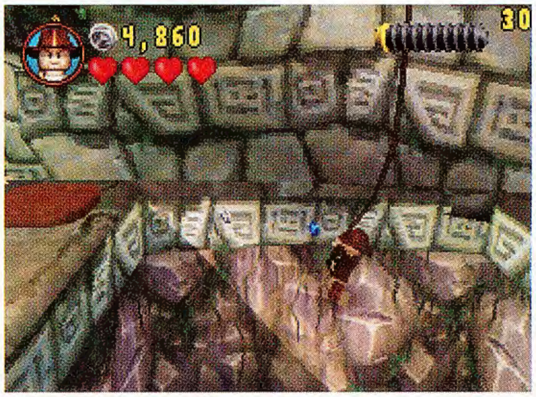
PLATFORM: **DS (ALSO ON Wii)** • PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2008**

The world's most famous archaeologist is in the midst of an amazing transformation from Hollywood icon and LEGO collectible figure to video game hero. The pairing of LucasArts and Traveller's Tales that created the LEGO Star Wars games is crafting Wii and DS titles based on Indiana's greatest movie moments from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Temple of Doom*, and *The Last Crusade*. One of the standout features in the DS game is Indy's touchscreen-activated whip, which allows him to attack villains, manipulate objects, and swing or climb to hard-to-reach locations. You'll be able to play as a host of other characters, too, including Dr. Jones Senior, Marcus Brody, Belloq, and Short Round—more than 60 in all—many of them with unique touch-controlled abilities. For instance, you can use the stylus to have Satipo and Sallah excavate sites (seems like a lot of work!) as you search for treasure or solve puzzles. Even the DS microphone gets into the act (though LucasArts won't say how) as you explore the game's 18 story levels. —SCOTT P.



Harrison Ford and LEGO games seem to go hand in hand. What's next? LEGO Patriot Games? LEGO Air Force One? LEGO Sabrina?



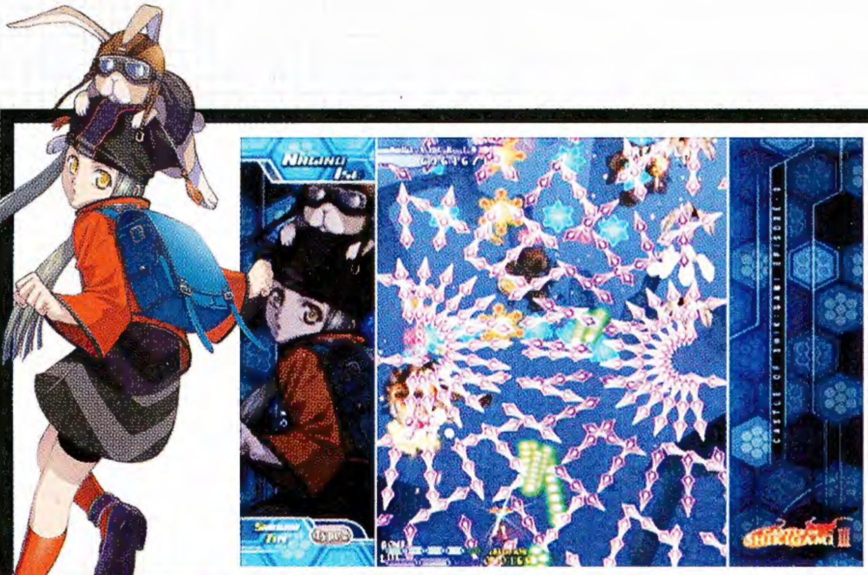
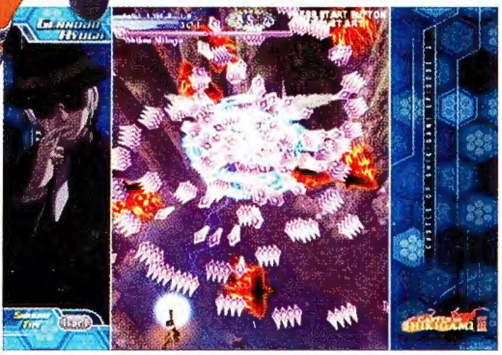
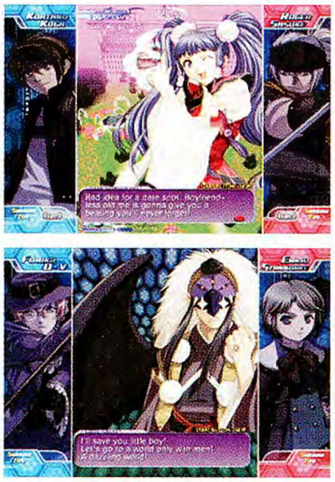


Indy's whip isn't just for attacking. Dr. Jones can also use it to swing safely over bottomless pits.

Bullet Ballet

> CASTLE OF SHIKIGAMI III

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ALFA SYSTEM** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

Like most shooters, Castle of Shikigami III throws a lot of deadly stuff your way. Unlike most shooters, however, you don't control ships—you actually fly around as some pretty funny characters.

Shoot-'em-ups are usually about avoiding enemy bullets—a difficult feat when there are literally hundreds of projectiles onscreen at once. Castle of Shikigami III, however, rewards you for flying close to attacks with High Tension shots, giving you a bigger point multiplier and the ability to deal more damage. Any little bit helps when you're an army of one—or two, if you've teamed up with a friend.

To play the game, simply turn the Wii remote sideways—or plug in a Classic controller if you prefer—and use the Control Pad to steer, the 2 Button to shoot, and the 1 Button for smart-bomb special attacks. Adding another layer of strategy are the Shikigami attacks: secondary regular attacks that you initiate by holding the 2 Button. You can also use the aforementioned High Tension shots at any time to enter High Tension MAX mode, which consumes one of your banked special attacks.

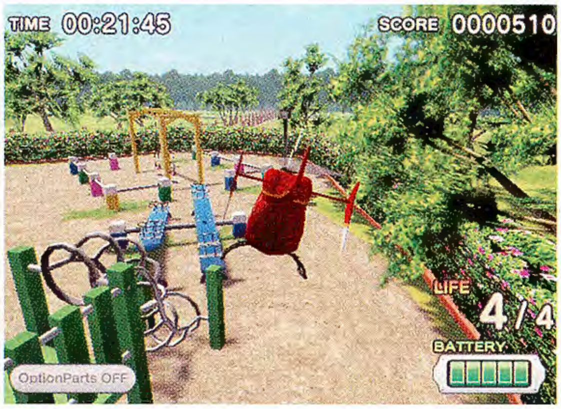
While we'll have to reserve judgment until the game's spring release, we have to mention how much we like the laughably non-sequitur dialogue from each of the 10 playable characters and the bosses they fight. —JUSTIN C.

Go for a Spin

> MINICOPTER: ADVENTURE FLIGHT

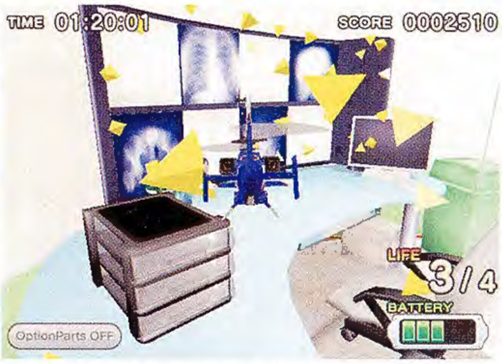
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC POWERED** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

Have you ever wanted to own a remote-controlled helicopter but weren't so keen on the fast-moving blades buzzing around above your head? Then Aksys has just the game for you: MiniCopter: Adventure Flight. Just like real RC copters, the vehicles in MiniCopter require a delicate touch, but three control schemes will let anyone become a master of the skies: tilt control (in which you hold the remote sideways and tilt it to move), pointer control (in which you point at the screen and use an onscreen cursor to guide your copter), and classic control (in which you fly via the dual analog sticks on the Classic controller). You can take flight in seven environments, including a hospital, a fast-food restaurant, and a tropical resort hotel, and take on more than 40 tasks, such as flying through rings, popping balloons with your air cannon, picking up trash with your suction cup, and even cooking and seasoning French fries. As you complete missions you'll earn cash, enabling you to buy better parts, including new chassis, batteries, blades, and motors. —CHRIS H.

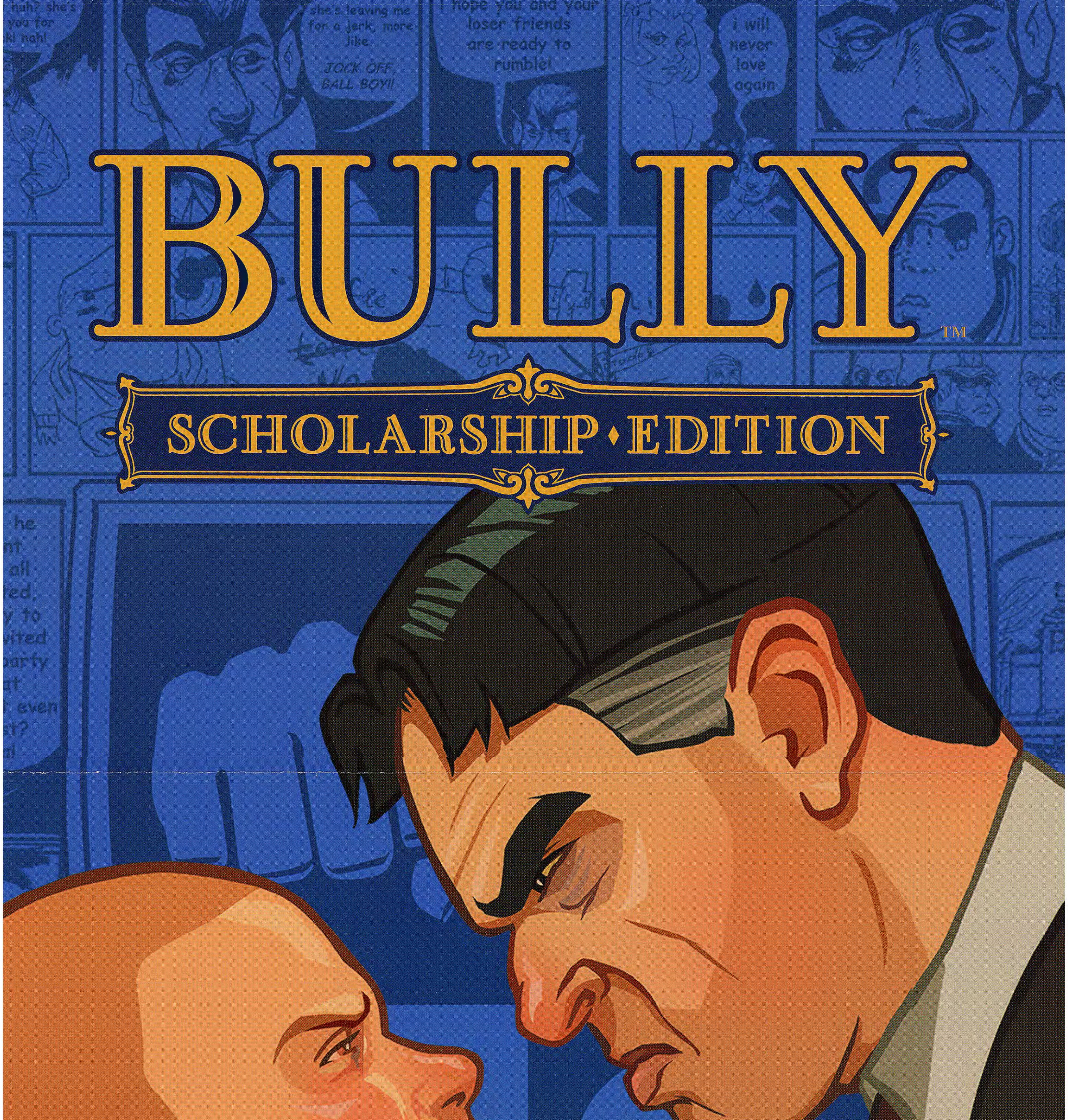


TIME 01:27:16
SCORE 0001260
LIFE 3/4
BATTERY

TIME 01:25:46
SCORE 0004700
LIFE 1/4
BATTERY



In the hospital stage you'll collect equipment for an examination and sort medication into its proper boxes. Remember, kids: All the best physicians do their work with RC helicopters.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SCHOLARSHIP ◆ EDITION
she's leaving me for a jerk, more like.
JOCK OFF, BALL BOY!!
I hope you and your loser friends are ready to rumble!
i will never love again

here we go
it was me sir....

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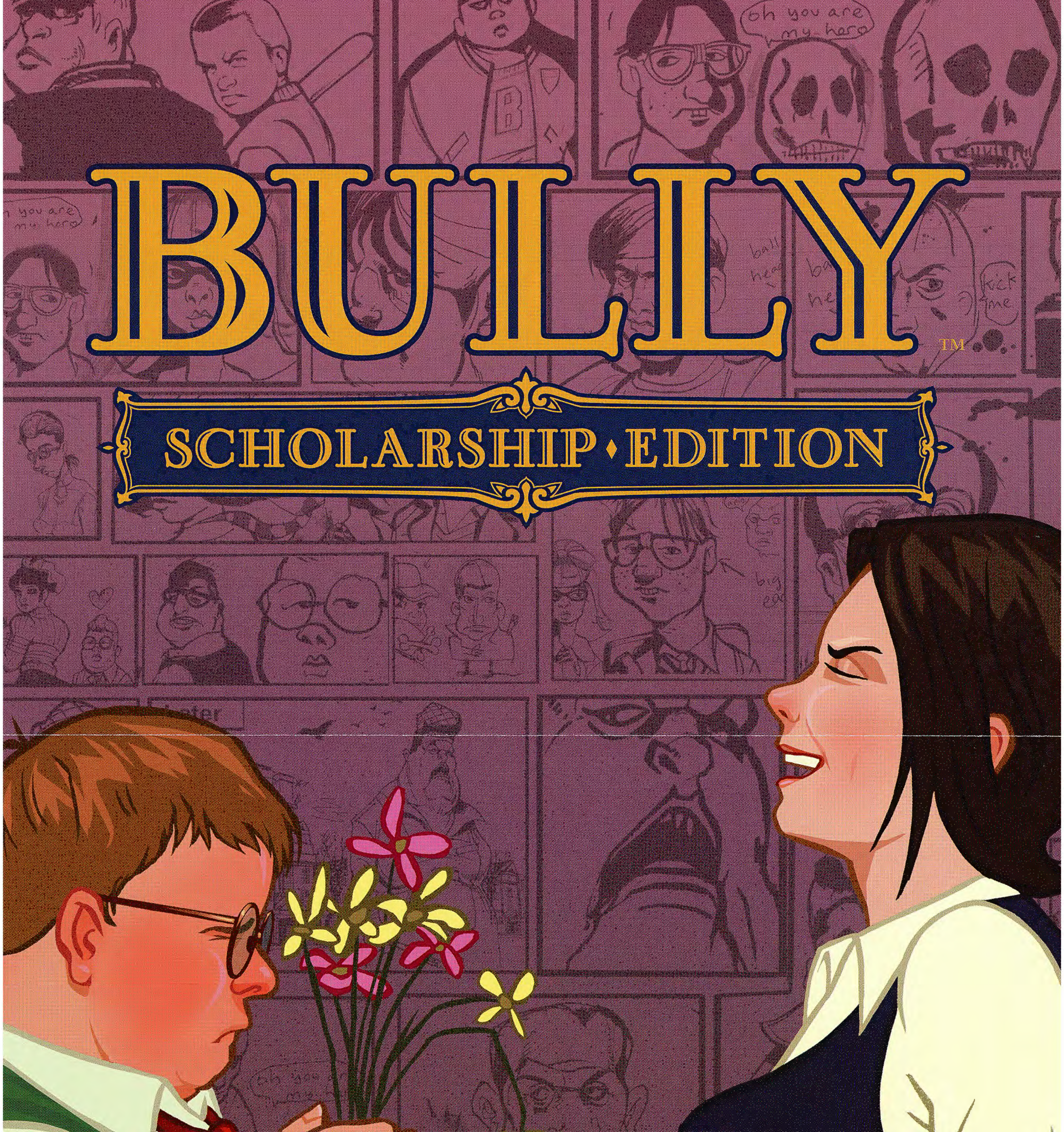
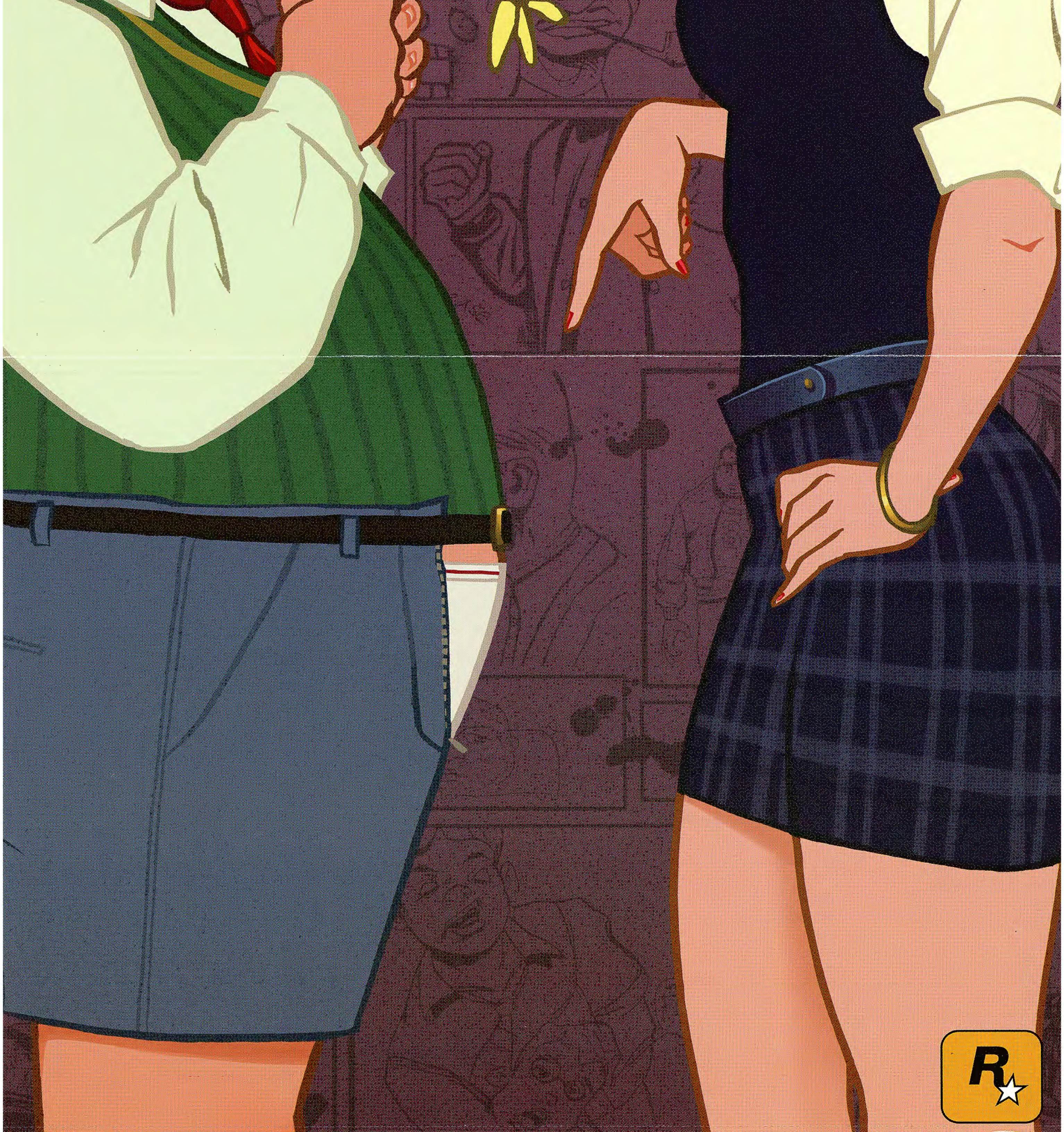
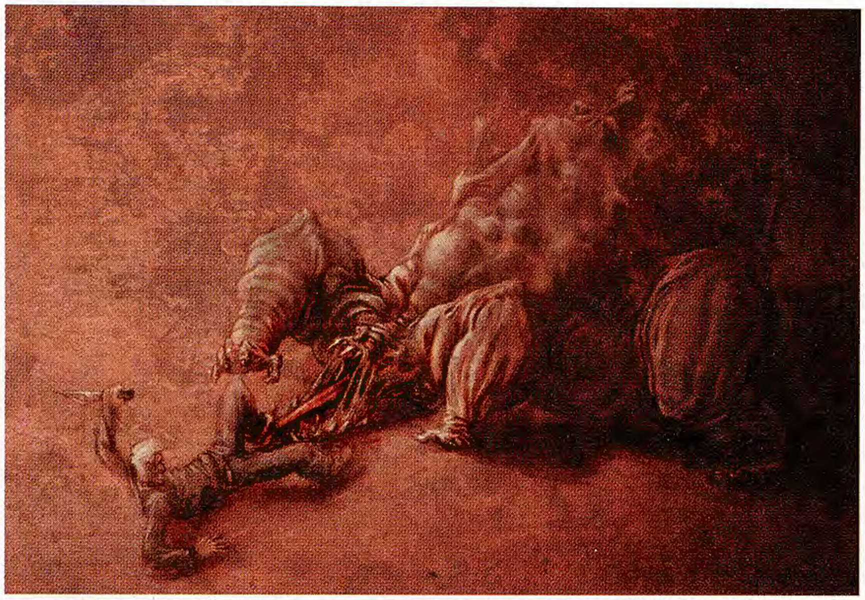

oh you are my hero
oh you are my hero
ball head
ball head
kick me

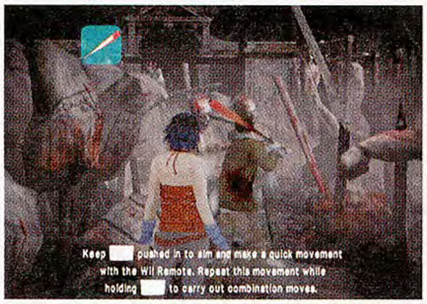


Scream Team

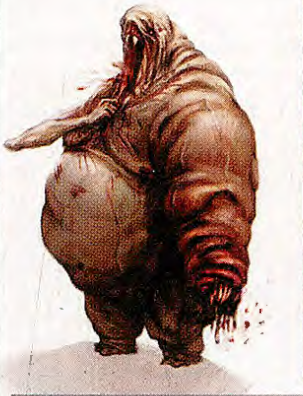
> OBSCURE: THE AFTERMATH

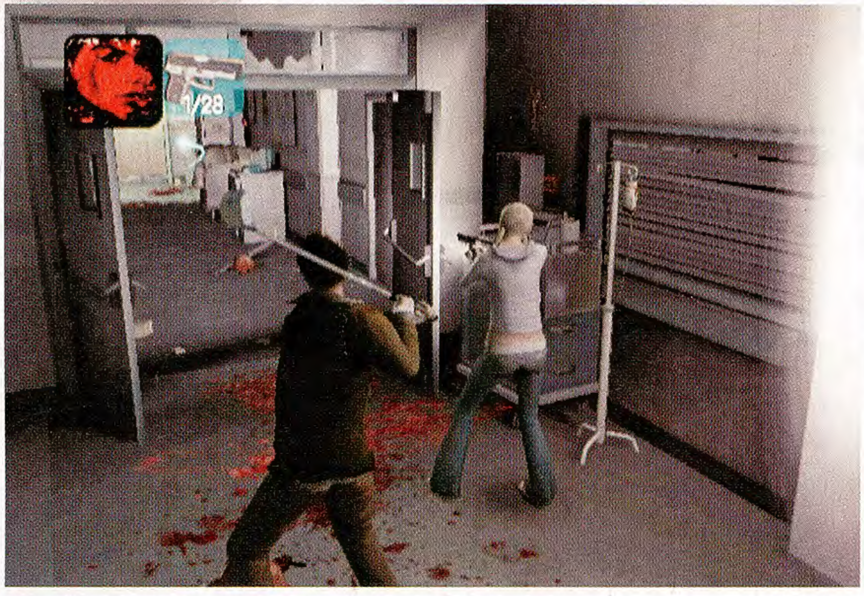
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **PLAYLOGIC**
DEVELOPER: **HYDRAVISION** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**





Keep pushed in to aim and make a quick movement with the Wii Remote. Repeat this movement while holding to carry out combination moves.





2005's appropriately titled *Obscure* was a little-known survival-horror game about five teenagers trying to survive in a high school overrun by monsters—monsters that were once human before a strange flower, which was thought of as a drug, changed them. The storyline of *The Aftermath*, the M-rated sequel, picks up two years later; some of the survivors are now attending college, and the flowers have started cropping up once again.

The game starts off like a stereotypical college story, with two of the main characters, Corey and Mei, off to have fun with some dorm mates before attending a frat party. Those dorm mates introduce the two to the flower, which has once again become a popular inhalant around the campus. It knocks the two of them out until they awaken in a cemetery (rarely a good thing) with their names written on tombstones (an even worse thing). This is where you're introduced to the fighting mechanics: after you've grabbed a melee weapon, you get into attack mode by holding the Z Button, and you swing your weapon with the B Button. Later, when you get your hands on some real firepower, you prepare to fire with the Z Button, shoot with B, and reload with A.

And you'll definitely need some weapons on hand, because it's a dangerous world out there. As Corey and Mei make their way past the cemetery and into some underground tunnels, the environment starts changing, Silent Hill-style, with what looks like blood coating nearly everything. Eventually the two awaken from their flower-induced hallucinations, drink some energy drinks—which counteract the flower's effects—and head off to find their friends, Kenny (one of the survivors from the first game) and Amy, who have already set off for the frat party.

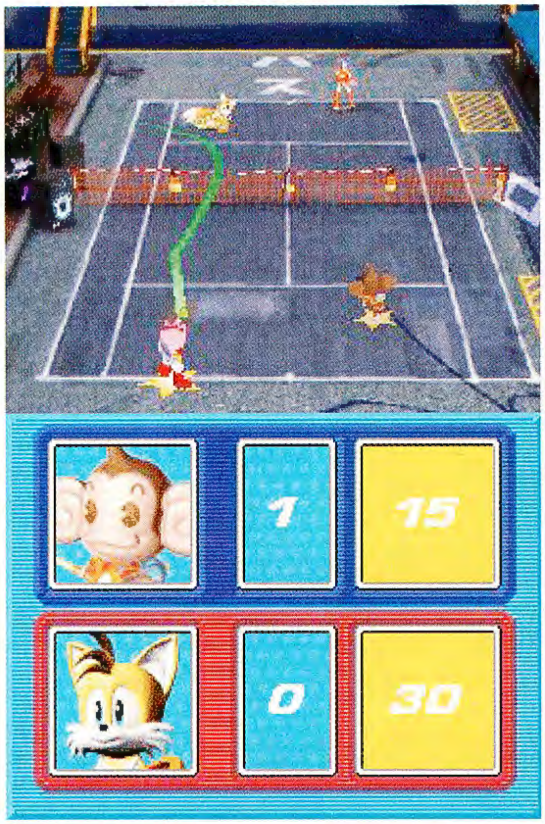
Exploring the frat house requires the use of each character's unique skills. Kenny is strong, so he can shove crates and bookshelves to solve puzzles (you press the B Button to grab moveable objects). Amy is good at decrypting, so she can find clues with a little *CSI*-like minigame: move the Wii remote like a brush to clear away dust covering some numbers, for example. Mei is a hacker, so she can bypass certain electronic locks with her PDA in another minigame: you're given some seemingly random letters and have to arrange them to spell a word. And Corey is an acrobat who can climb and reach areas no one else can: by pressing the B Button and flicking the Wii remote up, you can make Corey jump and grab onto certain ledges. You usually play as two characters at a time—you control one character while the AI controls the other, swapping as necessary—or a buddy can join in with a second Wii remote and nunchuk for some cooperative play. —JUSTIN C.

What a Racquet

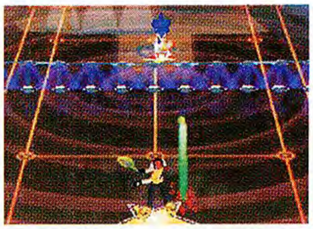
>SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

PLATFORM: **DS (ALSO ON Wii)** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

Not content to flaunt their athletic abilities only on consoles, the heroes of Sega are bringing their tennis skills to DS. Like its big-screen cousin, the portable version of Sega Superstars Tennis lets famous characters such as Sonic the Hedgehog, his buddy Tails, NiGHTS, Space Channel 5's Ulala, and Super Monkey Ball's AiAi (plus eight unlockable players, including Shadow the Hedgehog) hit the court in singles or doubles play. You can control the fast-paced action either by traditional means (the Control Pad and buttons) or a simplified touch-screen method (in which you tap the screen to swing after positioning your character). Superstar Powers, which give your hits special properties and crazy trajectories, add extra zaniness to the proceedings, and eight themed minigames based on Sega classics such as Space Harrier, Virtua Cop, Jet Set Radio, and House of the Dead will help you perfect your tennis acumen. Additionally, you can team up with or compete against your friends in local wireless matches for up to four players. —CHRIS H.



A monkey, a mutant squirrel, a pink hedgehog, and a dancer from outer space. We haven't seen a party like this since Steve Thomason's 21st birthday.

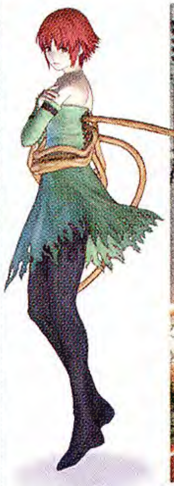


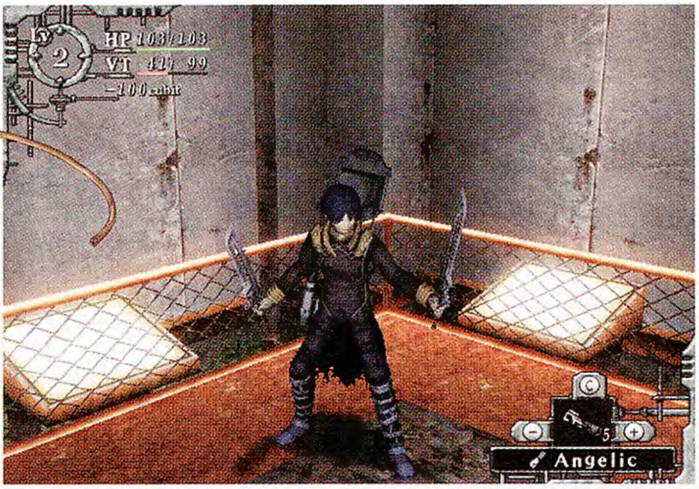
Going for Baroque

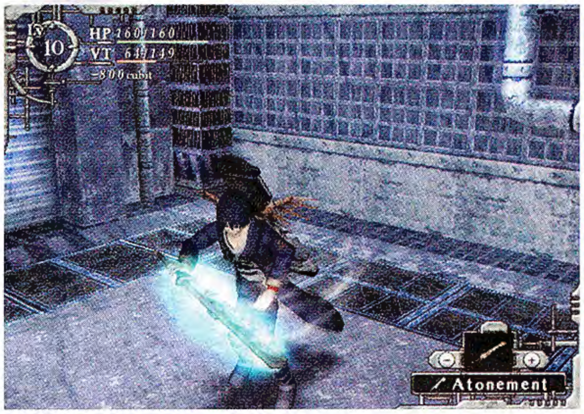
>BAROQUE

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **STING** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

By now most people associate Atlus with the weird and often dark RPGs they tend to publish, and Baroque, the first American release of a Japanese classic, certainly fits the bill. The game has you taking control of a nameless main character in a ruined world filled with grotesque monsters and disfigured remnants of humanity. Without much exposition you're given a weapon and told to explore a tower that holds the secrets to what happened to the world. Baroque is a dungeon-crawler, and fighting happens in real time. There are plenty of more-standard RPG elements, though, and you can customize your equipment and abilities with the myriad of items you'll find exploring the tower. Though the tower may seem endless at times, there are frequent opportunities to save or exit, and dying is not necessarily a bad thing—often you'll actually learn more about the world you're exploring when you die. Though it's not a typical RPG, Baroque fills Wii's oft-neglected role-playing niche nicely. —TOM H.







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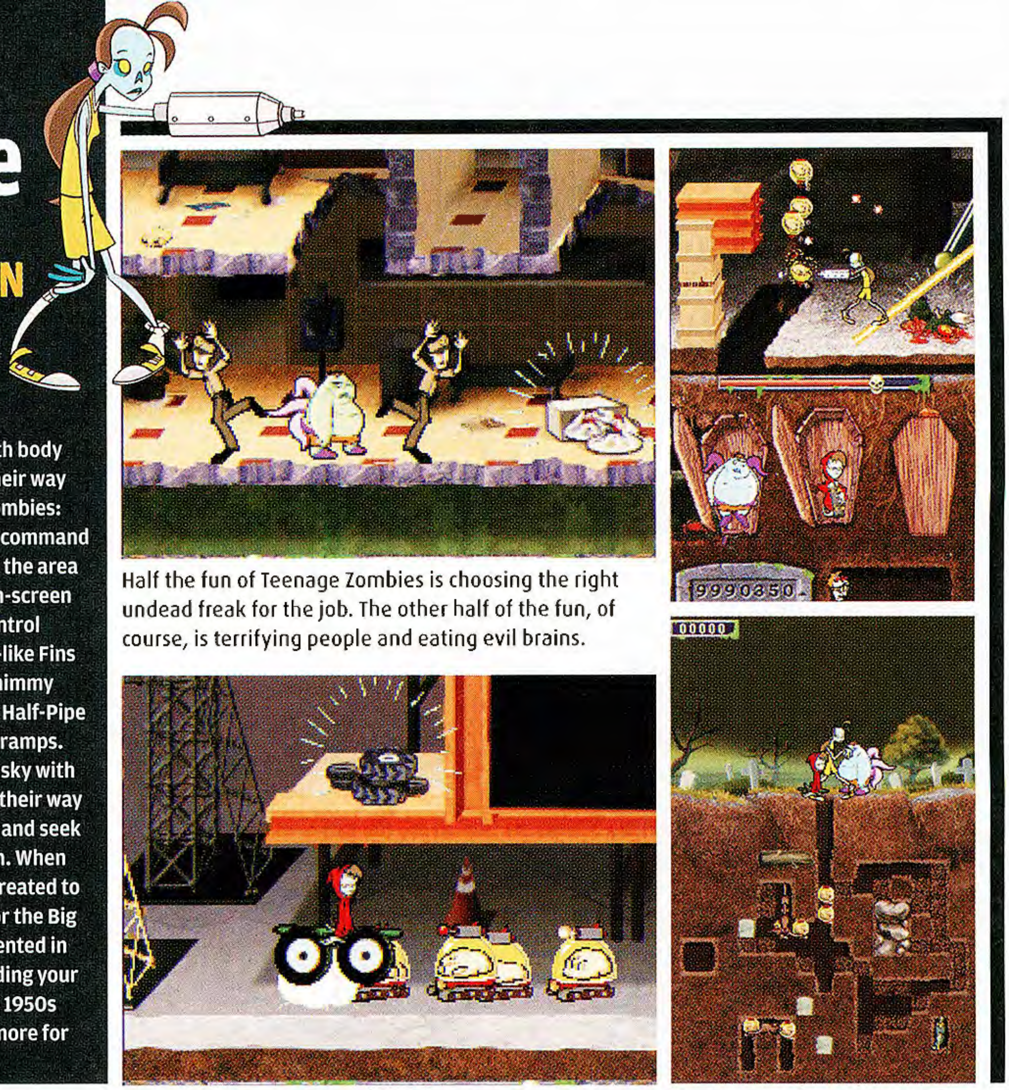
Piece Corpse

> TEENAGE ZOMBIES: INVASION OF THE ALIEN BRAIN THINGYS!

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **IGNITION**
DEVELOPER: **INLIGHT** • RELEASE: **SPRING 2008**

The suburban landscape is riddled with body parts after floating alien heads have had their way in Ignition's comic side-scroller Teenage Zombies: Invasion of the Alien Brain Thingys! Taking command over a trio of undead adolescents, you troll the area for brains, arms, legs, and baddies. A touch-screen zombie-selector allows you to alternate control between the playable characters. Octopus-like Fins uses suction-cup arms to scale walls and shimmy along pipes. Upper-torso-on-a-skateboard Half-Pipe fits through tight areas and gets big air off ramps. Long-limbed Lefty knocks aliens out of the sky with monster swipes. Together, the teens make their way across the neighborhood to feast on aliens and seek out the ultimate zombie meal: the Big Brain. When they do catch up with the cranium, you're treated to a series of touch-controlled microgames for the Big Brain Challenge. Story sequences are presented in comic-book panels that you view while holding your DS as if it were a book. The art style is pure 1950s sci-fi and the subject matter is played out more for laughs than for real chills. —GEORGE S.



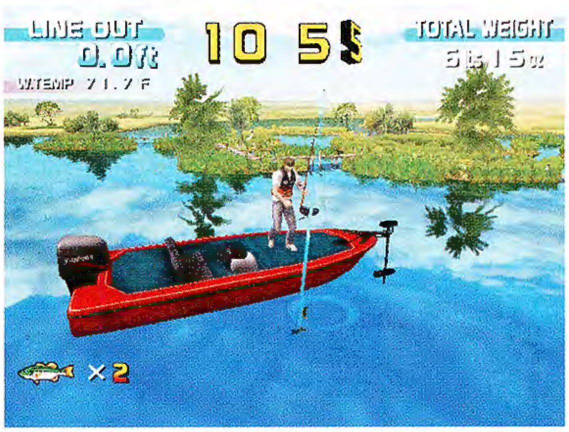
Half the fun of Teenage Zombies is choosing the right undead freak for the job. The other half of the fun, of course, is terrifying people and eating evil brains.

Reel 'Em In

> SEGA BASS FISHING

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA** • RELEASE: **FEBRUARY 2008**

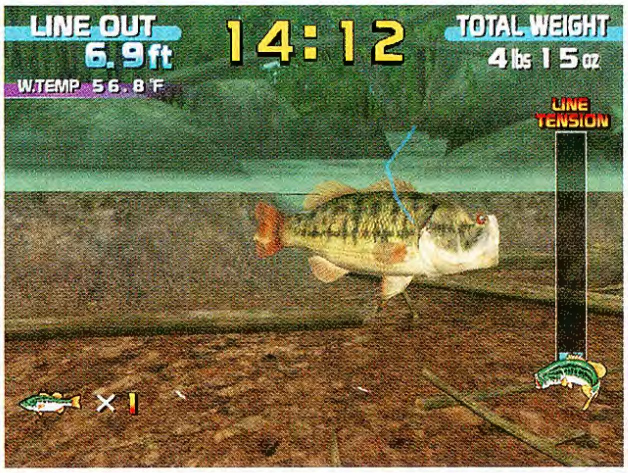
Sega Bass Fishing isn't going to be for everyone; it delivers exactly what the title implies it will, but if you're not into fishing games it won't turn you into an obsessed angler with a grey beard and a yellow slicker trying to land a lunker down at the pier. Probably. That said, Sega Bass Fishing is shaping up as a very enjoyable fishing game (even though the graphics aren't far removed from the arcade and Dreamcast game on which it's based). With more than 20 lures, 15 environments, changing weather and seasons, and multiple types of bass, the game is a very realistic simulation of fishing, and you'll learn how fish behave and how to catch them. You'll have to fight the fish by moving the Wii remote as you reel them in, which also feels pretty realistic. Once you master the basics, you can test your skills in Arcade mode (in which you'll have to catch a certain number of fish within a time limit) and Tournament mode (in which you'll compete against other fishermen). If you're looking for a realistic fishing sim for Wii, Sega Bass Fishing will definitely float your boat. —TOM H.



LINE OUT
0.0ft
14 17
TOTAL WEIGHT
4lbs 15oz
× 1

LINE OUT
15.6ft
14 07
TOTAL WEIGHT
4lbs 15oz
× 1

Bass Fun Fact #1: There are many types of bass, including striped bass, spotted bass, largemouth bass, and Chilean sea bass.
Bass Fun Fact #2: Bass are delicious when battered and fried.



The Great Outdoors

>ACTIVE LIFE: OUTDOOR CHALLENGE

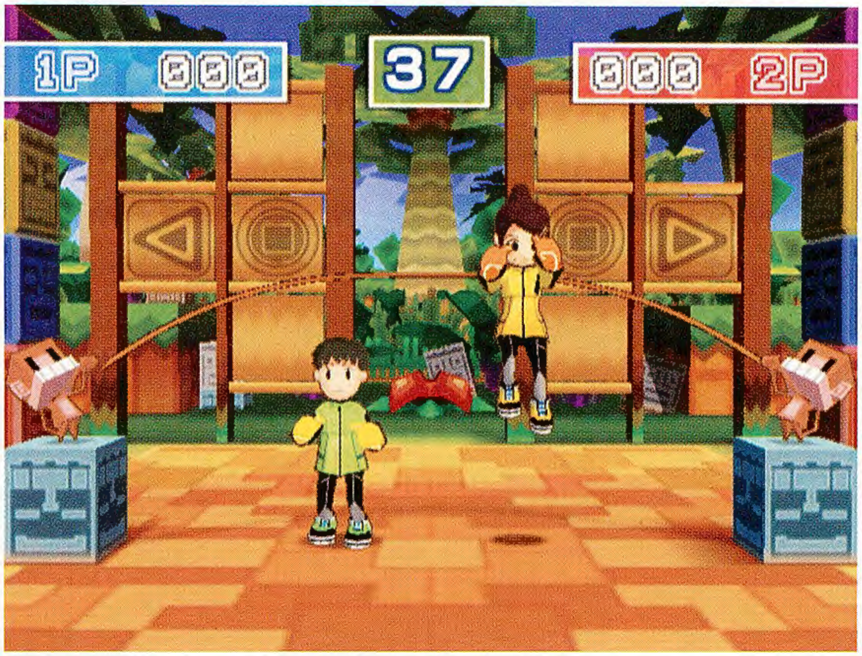
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

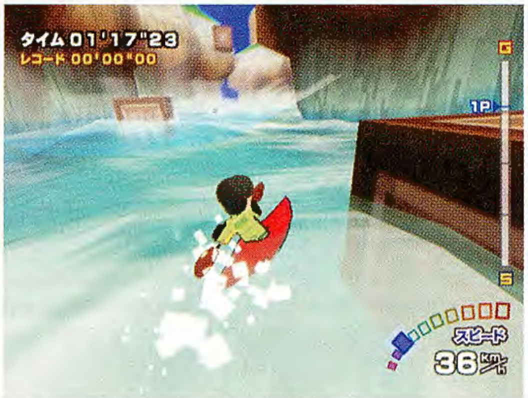
At first glance, Active Life: Outdoor Challenge seems like little more than another attempt to marry Wii's motion-sensing remote to various physical actions. After all, it offers more than a dozen popular outdoor activities like kayaking, foot racing, grassy-slope snowboarding, mole-stomping, and waterfall-climbing (okay, maybe "popular" is not quite the right term for some of those). Where Active Life breaks away from the pack is by offering each game at both casual and blistering—literally—levels of difficulty for competitive players.

Most of those blisters will end up on your feet, thanks to the included foot-pad controller. It's similar to the pads used for Dance Dance Revolution, but with twice as many buttons. That allows for two people to play side by side in competitive games, or for a single player to run by stomping on the center buttons and still step to either the right or left to avoid obstacles. The button arrangement allows for some pretty cool actions, like keeping both feet on buttons while doing a hand-plant onto a side button, which will send your character ducking under tunnels in the hill-sliding game. You'll probably want to make sure that grandma has taken her osteoporosis pills before you let her play that one.

Not all of the games are competitive—the collection is being carefully tweaked to appeal to all ages and genders, and there are even a handful of cooperative games intended for families. The waterfall climb is a good one—one player leaps on the pad at the same time as another pulls a Wii remote up like a rope. Another game puts both players in a mine cart, where they must lift the same foot off the pad to dodge obstacles by tilting the cart to the side. In more-advanced difficulties, each player will also use a Wii remote: one person will shoot stalactites with the pointer while the other holds the remote horizontally and pumps it like...uh...whatever that thing is people pump in mine carts. Even the easier games, like the leisurely kayak ride (in which players sit on the pad and swing the Wii remote like a paddle) have several unlockable difficulty settings that add progressively more-challenging gimmicks to the game.

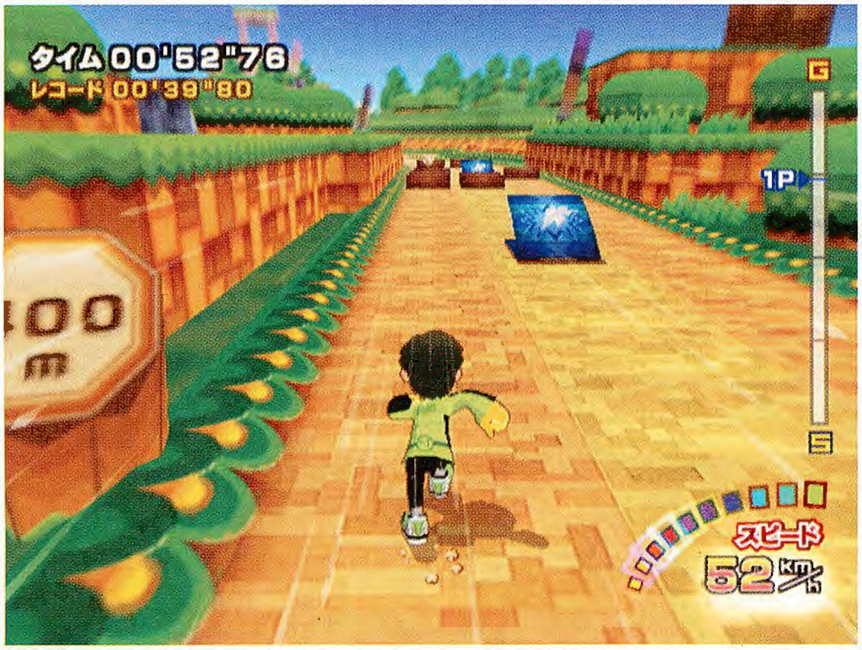
At harder levels, Active Life: Outdoor Challenge is an extremely physically demanding game, even by Wii standards. The developers leading the demo were soaked with sweat after only a few minutes, and on a brisk January day. Director Hiroma Mori is toying with the idea of adding in fitness and weight-loss modes, but doesn't seem too excited about that prospect: "The point of the game is to have fun, period," she declares. She seems well on her way to accomplishing that goal. —CASEY L.





The final game may or may not have Mii support (the development team is working on it), but it would be a shame to see those adorable default characters kicked to the curb.

Kayaking seems like a relaxing affair, as it involves sitting comfortably on the mat while rowing with a Wii remote. But when you hit the Class VI rapids and their cascade of falling blocks, you'll get a workout.



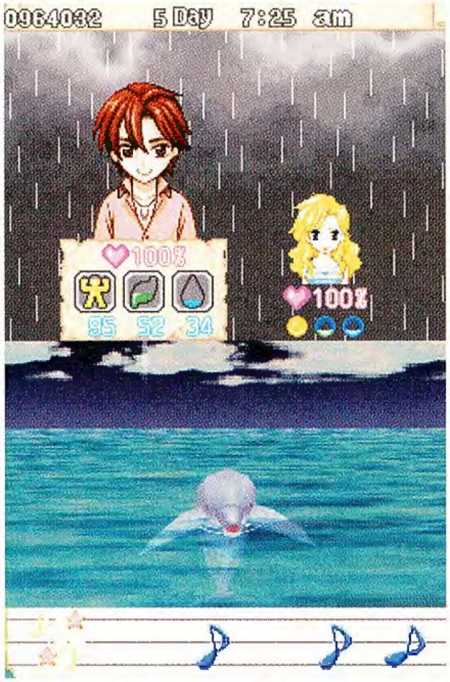
Paradise Lost

> LOST IN BLUE 3

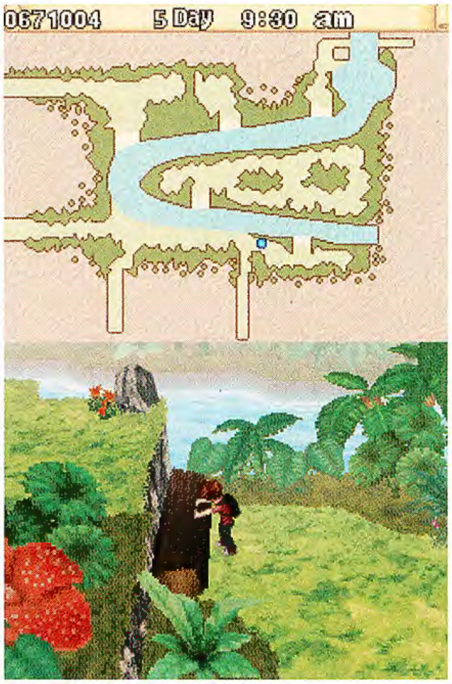
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

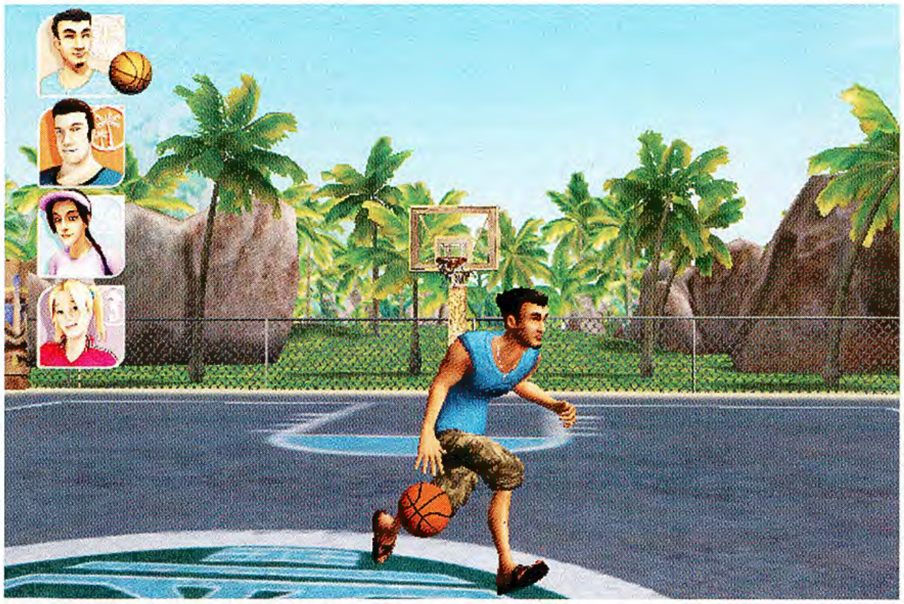
Konami's Lost in Blue series is borrowing from ABC's *Lost* for its third chapter by offering insights into the lives of its four characters through pre-shipwreck flashbacks. The castaways' memories reveal details on how they could find a way off the game's tropical island. Each character has skills that he or she uses to get around, so the survivor you choose to control dictates the paths that you'll be able to take. You can go it alone or cooperate with the AI-controlled others for help in gathering food and building shelter. For the third title, the developers promise an improved balance between the challenges of surviving and the fun of exploration; you'll uncover mysteries about the island and participate in 20 minigames that have you river-rafting, communicating with dolphins, and taking on other island activities. New to the series are earthquakes and harsh weather conditions, so if severe hunger doesn't get you, a bolt of lightning might.

Multiplayer sessions center around cooking challenges. You can face off with another Lost in Blue fan, or recruit players by sharing downloadable minigames. —**GEORGE S.**



Kumiko
I'm f-fine.. Ooooh..



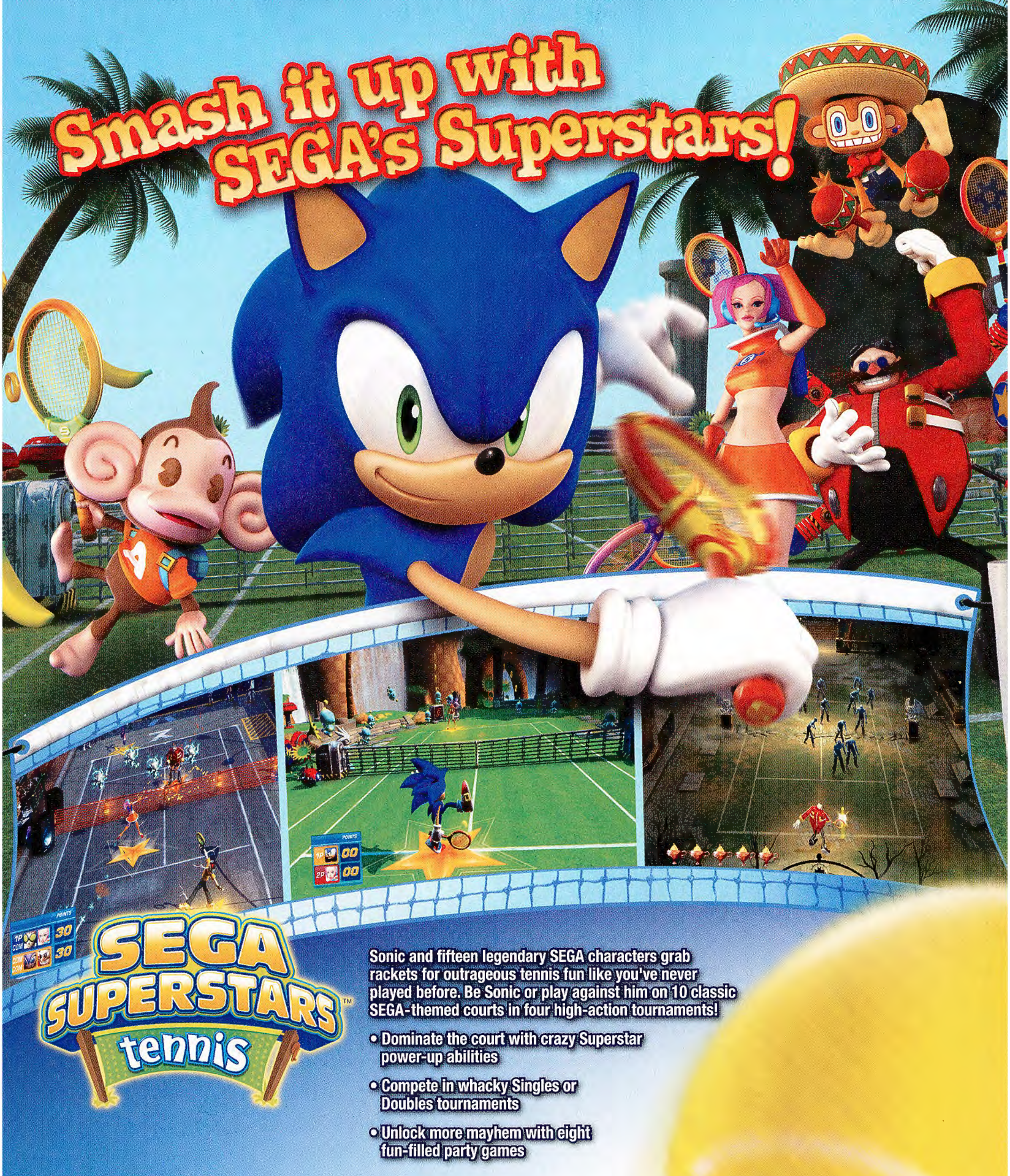


Casual Athletics

> SUMMER SPORTS: PARADISE ISLAND

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **DESTINEER**
DEVELOPER: **DIGITAL EMBRYO** • RELEASE: **MARCH 2008**

Given the world-conquering popularity of Wii Sports, it should come as no surprise that similar offerings are on the way from a number of publishers. And while it might seem like everyone's jumping on the gravy train, there's certainly room to expand on the concept. Case in point: Destineer's Summer Sports: Paradise Island, which hosts a completely different slate of activities than those offered by Nintendo's pack-in title. You've got lawn darts, basketball, horseshoes, croquet, volleyball, badminton, and mini-golf, all supporting up to four players and featuring controls simple enough for grandma to join in. Things moved a bit sluggishly during our early play test, and some of the events fare better than others (mini-golf and volleyball are fun; lawn darts... I'm not so sure), but there's potential here for some lighthearted fun at parties and social gatherings. —**STEVE T.**



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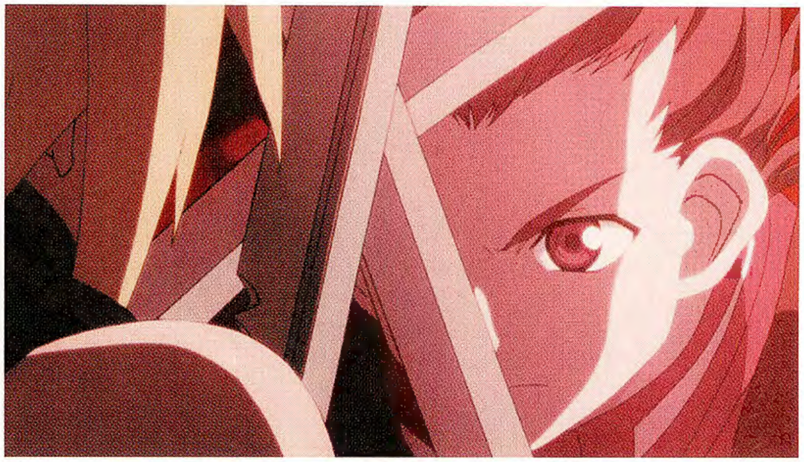
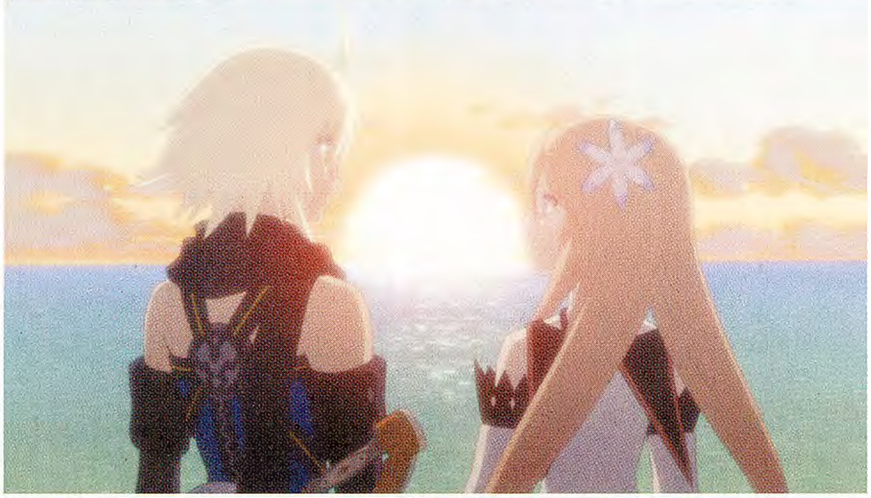




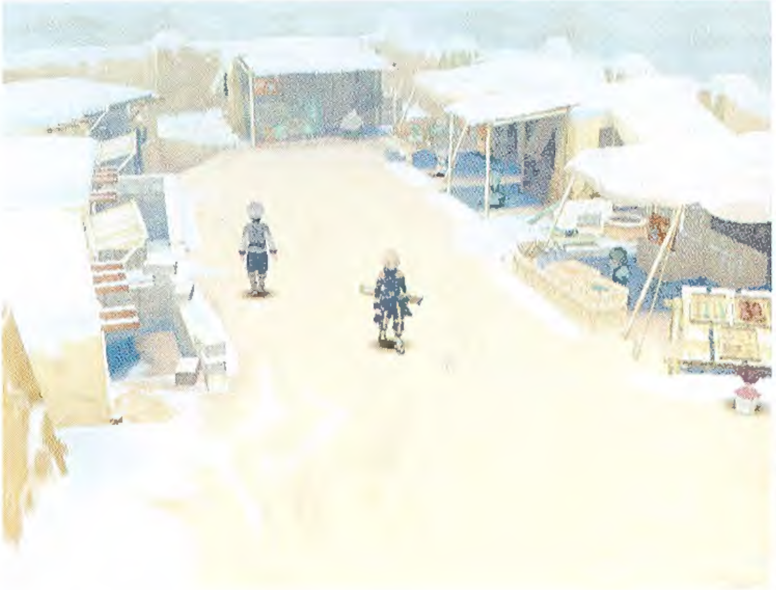
BY CASEY LOE

SYMPHONIC SWEET

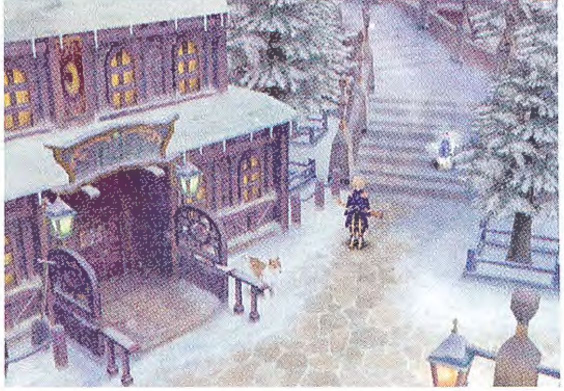
the KNIGHT *of* RATATOSK MARCHES *on* NORTH AMERICA *in* TALES *of* SYMPHONIA: DAWN *of the* NEW WORLD

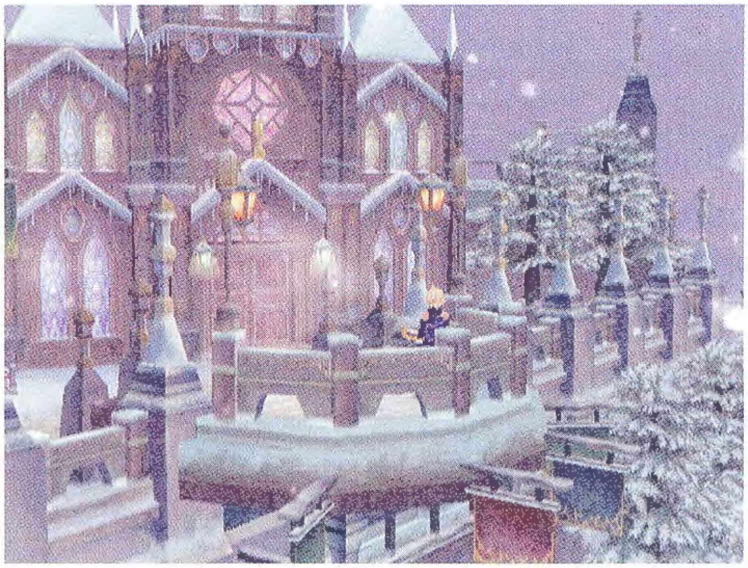
Four years ago, Namco Tales Studio charged GameCube owners with saving the dying world of Sylvarant in the RPG epic Tales of Symphonia. Now the studio invites you to bear witness to the dawn of the new Sylvarant in the long-awaited Wii follow-up.

Tales of Symphonia was a monster hit on the GameCube, selling over 450,000 copies in North America alone. That was thrilling news for the developers of Namco's prolific Tales series, but it was a feat that has never been repeated—the two subsequent installments on the PlayStation 2 sold only a small fraction of what Symphonia did. It's hard to say why Symphonia succeeded while its successors did not—its more likable cast? The timing of its release? Or just some special snippet of Tales-loving DNA found primarily in Nintendo fans? Whatever the reason, the planets may have finally realigned for Namco Tales Studio: once again, they have a promising RPG for a Nintendo console and little serious competition in the genre.



The desert town of Triet may now be a winter wonderland, but the ever-chilly city of Flanoir hasn't thawed any.





The difference this time is that Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World isn't a typical Tales-series release. It falls somewhere between a spin-off and a sequel, neither of which is standard practice for a series that typically creates a new setting and a new cast for each installment. Instead, Dawn of the New World picks up two years after the conclusion of the original Tales of Symphonia, in a world that has been shaken by the drastic measures that were necessary to resolve that game's central conflict. Monsters are now running wild, the alliances forged in the previous game are beginning to crumble, and the world is in the throes of a drastic climate shift that would make Al Gore smash his slide projector in despair.

Those climatic disturbances have breathed new life into Symphonia's familiar settings; the scenic waterways of Luin are now less-than-scenic dry riverbeds, and the palm trees and adobe roofs of desert-oasis town Triet are dusted with fresh snow. So while every town in Dawn of the New World comes straight from its predecessor (as do roughly half of its dungeons), nothing will be exactly the way you remember it. Even the areas that have been spared from drastic environmental change have been completely retextured to take advantage of Wii's additional memory.

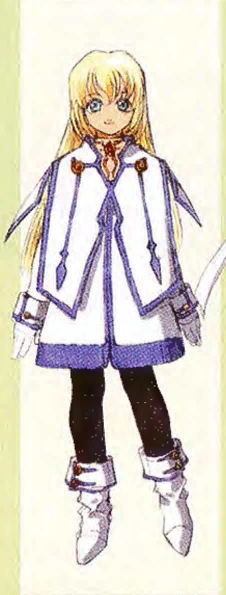
This weather-ravaged world is the setting of what may be the darkest story in the series yet. The tale was penned by Takumi Miyajima (who also wrote the original Symphonia), and is told through more than 11 hours of voiced event scenes and the Tales

WHAT *of* SYMPHONIA'S TRIUMPHANT HEROES?

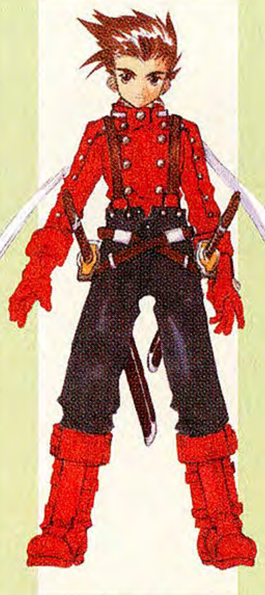
BEWARE! SPOILERIFFIC PLOT DETAILS

Though the developers are convinced that Emil's quest will satisfy even those who have never played a Tales game before, I wouldn't chance it—if you haven't played through Symphonia yet, now's the time to dust off your copy or go diving through the "used" bins at your local video game store. In fact, put down this article and go do that now, because we're about to spoil some of the original Symphonia's secrets.

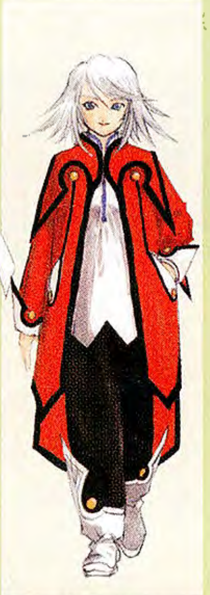
I have good news for the Symphonia veterans who remain: every surviving character from the original Tales of Symphonia will be playable as a guest character in Dawn of the New World, each lovingly redesigned by new character designer Daigo Okumura. That includes Zelos, who survived in what the developers have deemed the canonical ending to Tales of Symphonia. Of course, poor Kratos will be unavailable as a storyline character, but his fans should be pleased to see the respect paid to his legacy—he's even landed a gig as the game's opening narrator.



COLETTE



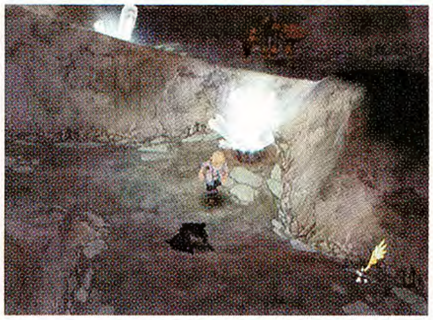
LLOYD



RAINE

series' trademark character skits. The event scenes have received a major upgrade in Dawn of the New World, and now feature more realistically proportioned characters, cinematic camera angles, and (for the first time in the series) motion-captured character animation. The folks at the American branch of Namco Bandai aren't ready to commit to anything yet, but the prospects are looking good for fully voiced skits and perhaps even actual theme-song vocals in the game's North American version. "We know what our North American fans want, and we're going to try to give them as much of what they want as we can," promises localization team member Andy Tsai.

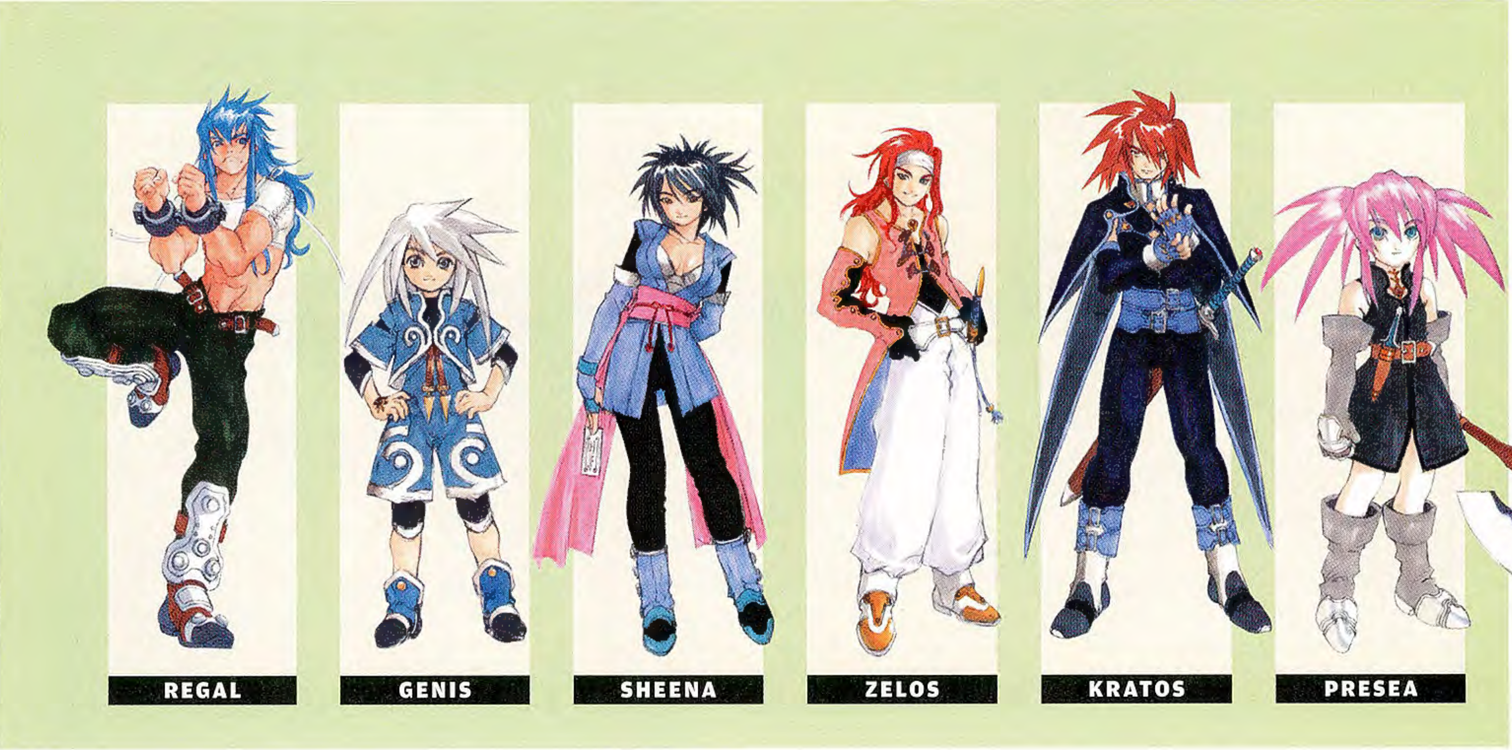
In field areas, you can move Emil with either the nunchuk or the Wii remote—note the pointer icon in the lower-right corner.



Lloyd Irving, the Butcher of Palmacosta?

Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World opens in the town of Luin, where the grateful villagers have built shrines for each of the heroes of the previous game. But new protagonist Emil isn't so taken with the great heroes of yore—the game opens with him being bullied for failing to pay appropriate respects at the statue of Lloyd. In fact, Emil is certain that Lloyd is responsible for the slaughter of Emil's family during the razing of the town of Palmacosta, an incident that occurred when a Sylvarant separatist group known as the Vanguard led its forces into a bloody clash against

While Dawn of the New World has no new towns to offer, it does offer several new dungeons to explore.



Palmacosta's Church of Martel, and its figurehead—Symphonia's own Colette. Say it ain't so, Lloyd!

Emil's strange affinity with the wild beasts that prowl outside of town isn't winning him many friends either, but it does lead him to the game's heroine, Marta. Marta is an emissary of Ratatosk, the spirit of mana and the lord of the world's wild beasts. In fact, Ratatosk seems to be sleeping in a red bubble on Marta's forehead, and it's hard for her to rest easy when her bangs are the only thing protecting the most widely hunted divine entity on the planet. But Marta sees something in the meek Emil that he fails to see within himself, and is convinced that she can transform him into her guardian and a powerful emissary of Ratatosk.

The original Symphonia heroes will come and go as they please, but Marta, Emil, and their horde of beastly recruits will be with you from start to finish.

Recruiting Ratatosk's Beastly Minions

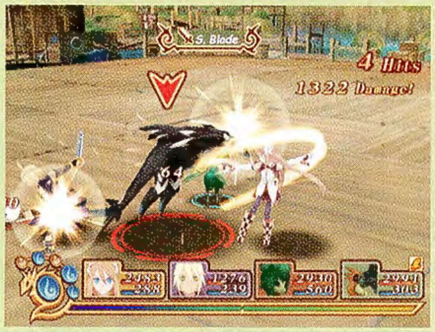
Emil and Marta are the stars of Dawn of the New World, and are the only permanent human members of your party. At certain points in their quest they'll be joined by guest characters from the original Tales of Symphonia, but most of the time the other half of their four-party roster will be filled by recruited monsters. There are more than 230 monsters that Emil can win over to his cause, and while they're not directly playable the way Emil and Marta are, you can set their AI tactics, give them orders in combat, and guide their development as they level up and evolve. At the end of each battle you can attempt to recruit the monsters you defeated if you've met certain conditions—in our demo, that meant using certain characters and moves to change the battlefield's elemental subtype to something a given monster would find hospitable.

When granted an opportunity to recruit a monster, you can choose a monster from your own party to help Emil make the appeal.

RECRUITING *and* REARING YOUR MONSTER ARMY

Consider the Elements of Battle

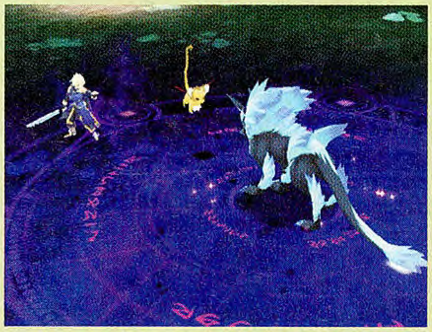
In the lower-left corner of the screen you'll notice a series of elemental icons. The smaller icons represent the elements of the characters and monsters on the battlefield, while the larger one represents the elemental nature of the battlefield itself. By using certain abilities or making an elementally aligned party, you can sway the elemental balance to match that of a monster you seek to recruit. If you do, you may get an opportunity to recruit it at the end of the battle.



The elemental system has other subtle but potentially significant effects on combat. For example, a watery battlefield will take some of the sting out of your fireballs.

Bolster Your Party with Monstrous Allies

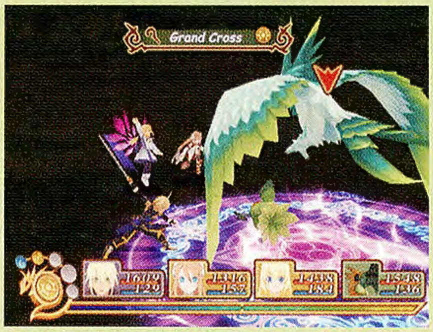
Once you've recruited your chosen monster, you can choose to add it to your four-character party roster. You can't take direct control over monsters the way you can with human characters, but you can give them basic strategic guidelines, select which skills and combat "artes" they will use, and set up shortcuts so that you can order them to use a specific arte with a tap of the Control Pad or a swing of your Wii remote. Monsters level up in battle just like humans, and Emil and Marta may learn new skills simply by fighting alongside their new monster friends.



Using a monster that is well-matched to your potential recruit will increase your odds of success. Here, Eevee convinces Suicune to join the party...uh, sorry—wrong game!

Treat Your Beasts to Wonder-Chef Cuisine

Once recruited, you can feed your monsters confections cooked with recipes learned from the Tales series' legendary Wonder Chef, who has abandoned the haute cuisine of sandwiches and rice balls to focus on the burgeoning monster-food industry. The meals you feed your beasts will affect which stats get a boost when they level up, and may lead them to evolve into entirely new creatures. Evolution is the only way to get some of the game's strongest monsters; for example, many bosses cannot be recruited directly, so you'll need to evolve weaker monsters into them.



You can even recruit boss-sized monsters like this giant raptor to your party, but they won't be easy to snare. Maybe this similarly colored monster chick is the key?

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What chance will our meek young hero have when Zelos starts putting the moves on Marta? Better grow a pair soon, Emil!

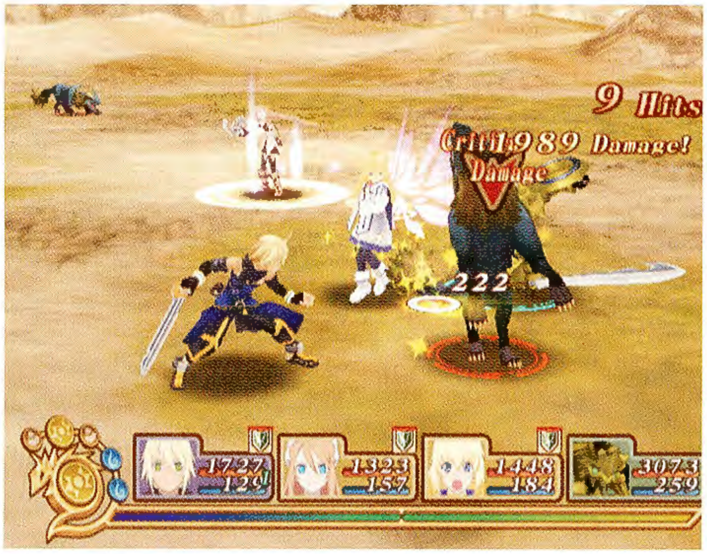
Some monsters get along better than others, and choosing an appropriate monster will increase your odds of success dramatically. As with all Tales games, you have plenty of party roster slots for characters beyond the four you're allowed to use in combat, so you can reconfigure your party as necessary to appeal to local monsters or overcome the specific challenges in each dungeon.

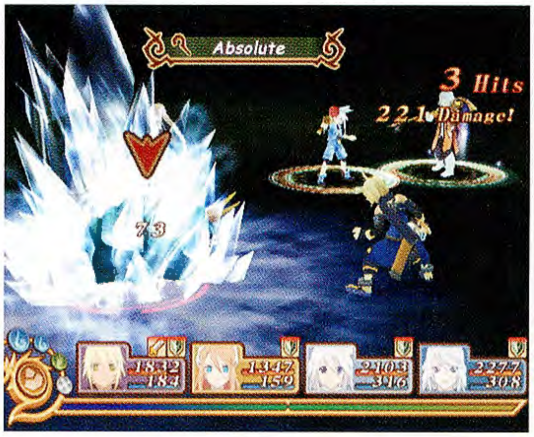
Tales-series fans who skipped the PlayStation 2 installments will appreciate the many other changes to the battle system, which meshes Symphonia's popular Union Attack system with the many upgrades found in Tales of the Abyss on the PS2. Your characters can now equip a free-run skill that allows for true 3-D movement, and Emil's move set seems to have a strong focus on aerial attacks and juggling that makes him one of the series' flashiest and most fun heroes to play.

Merging the Worlds of Sequel and Spin-Off

The number of recycled environments in Dawn of the New World is a little disappointing, as is the replacement of the traditional world map with a simplified point-and-click map that sends you straight to any unlocked area without the feeling of a real journey. But for every aspect of Dawn of the New World that seems simplified or rehashed, there's something new and interesting to replace it. The elaborate systems for collecting and rearing monsters is completely new to the series, and a focus on only two lead characters opens the door for more character-building and customization options than ever before.

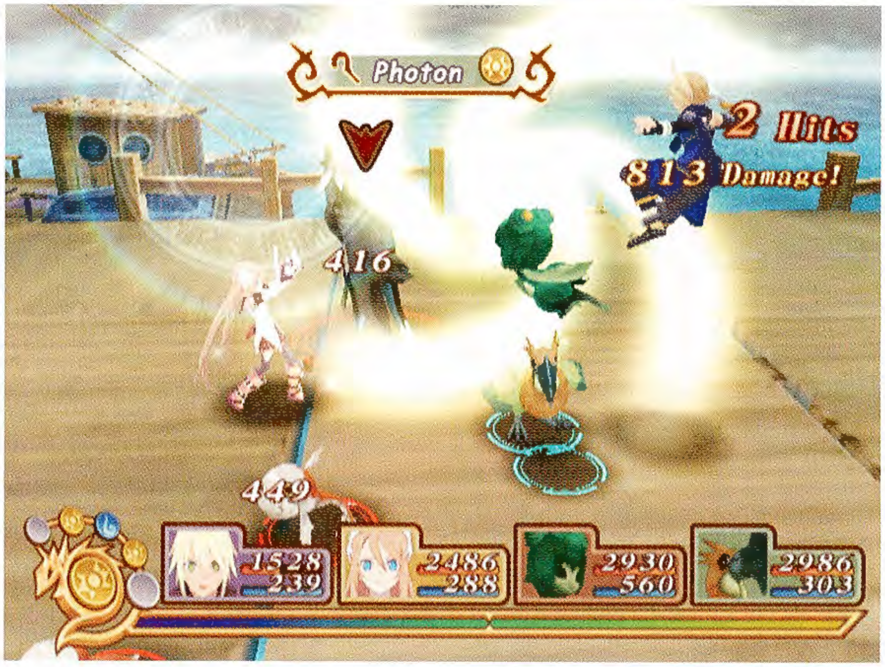
Like Dragon Quest and Pokémon, the games of the Tales series tend to follow a strict formula that changes relatively little from installment to installment. Dawn of the New World uses a lot of the series' trademark elements, but diverges from the formula more than any console Tales-series release yet. "This game is not Tales of Symphonia 2," says Producer Tsutomu Gouda, noting the many experimental aspects of the game's structure and mechanics. "In terms of the storyline, however, Symphonia 2 is exactly what it is."

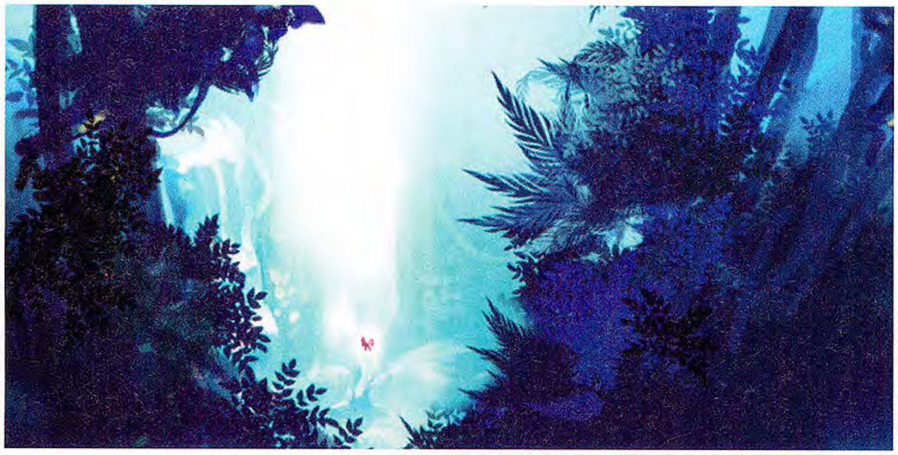




Like Colette, Marta combines respectable physical strength with an assortment of ranged spells. She can fight with Emil on the front line when Raine and Genis are in town, or fall back and cast spells to support a fighter-heavy party.

It's been two years, Sheena, and your bra is *still* showing—it's starting to look a little bit desperate. But clearly Emil only has eyes (and shoulder rubs) for Marta... awwww.





the COMPOSERS *of* SYMPHONIA

Dawn of the New World's R&D producer Teruaki Konishi and producer Tsutomu Gouda discuss the conception of the Symphonia sequel, working with Wii, and mythological squirrels.

2007.12.21 ON SALE

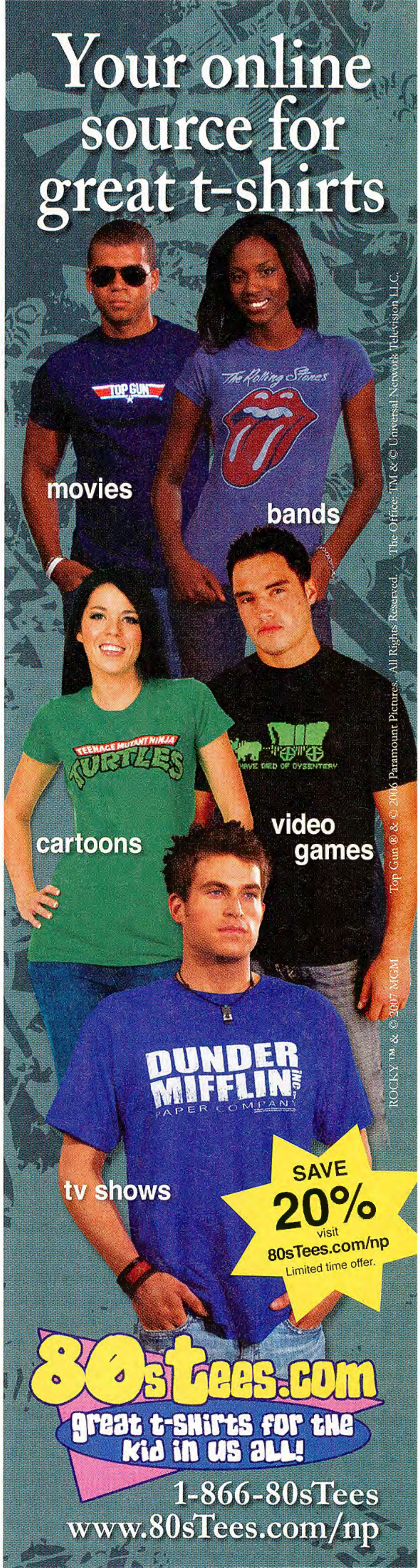
We understand that Tales of Symphonia was far and away the best-selling Tales game ever released in the US. What would you attribute that to?

TERUAKI KONISHI Part of the reason was that it was a very high-quality game that we're all proud of, but that's just my personal opinion, of course. Certainly that alone does not guarantee success; one of the biggest reasons it sold so well was that it had very effective marketing that convinced consumers to give it a chance and see its quality for themselves.

TSUTOMU GOUDA I think part of its success can also be attributed to the fact that it was the first 3-D game in the Tales series, and 3-D games tend to be a lot more successful in the North American market. Another reason was that it was a near-launch title, and it was one of the first—if not *the* first—RPG to be released on the GameCube, and that helped a lot. As far as I know, it's actually *still* selling fairly well in the US. In fact, I believe it's selling even better than Tales of the Abyss [its successor, for the PlayStation 2] is.

Why did you decide to make a direct sequel to Tales of Symphonia, instead of a game in a new world, or a more traditional 1,000-years-later sequel?

TK During the planning stages of this title, it was originally planned as more of a Tales of Symphonia spin-off; it wasn't really intended to be a sequel. But considering how popular the characters were internationally, we wanted to do justice to them and give their fans something that they would be happy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Lloyd and Colette seem to be major players in the new Sylvarant, but it isn't yet clear what roles the other Symphonia alums will play.

with. So we decided to increase the scale of Dawn of the New World to expand it to be what it is now. And in order to do that, we decided to make it a direct story sequel that would use the same characters.

Casual games have a reputation for selling very well on the Wii, particularly in Japan, but Tales is perceived as a very hardcore series. Are you making any concessions for the Wii's more casual audience?

TK This is something we were very concerned about during the development process. We wanted to bring the Tales experience to the Wii, but at the same time we didn't want to compromise the quality of the Tales series or diminish the full RPG experience. So we decided to satisfy Tales fans and hardcore RPG fans first and foremost. But we do understand that the Wii is very popular with casual gamers, and that is part of the reason we implemented the monster system. We felt that would help bring in casual gamers, because it's more of a "fun" game system.

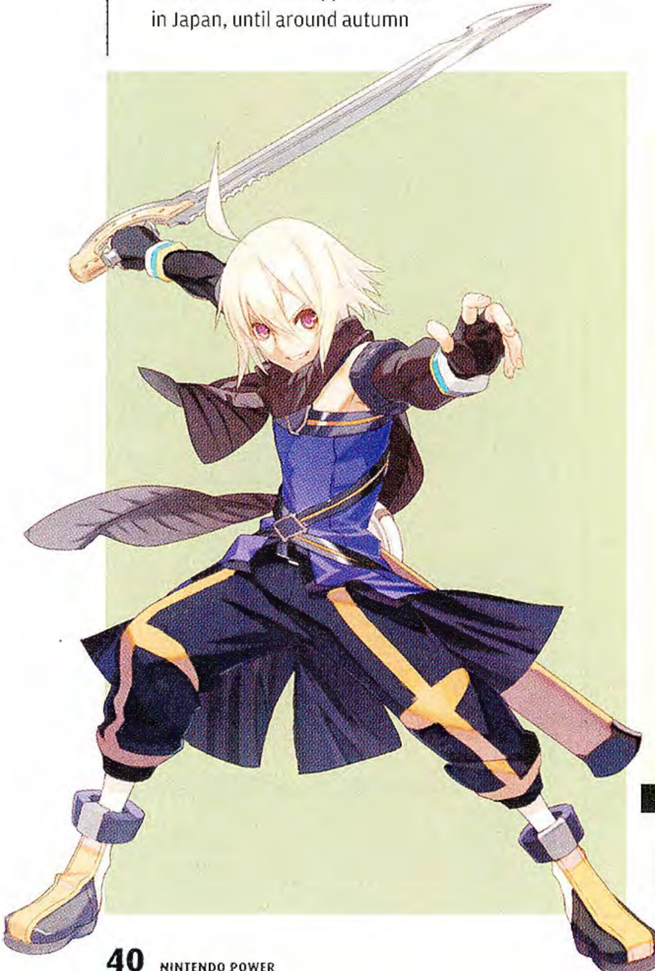
TG It's important to note that the Wii's popularity with casual gamers didn't become apparent, even in Japan, until around autumn of last year. This project actually started around the summer of 2006, and at that time no one else had announced an RPG for the Wii, so we wanted to deliver a full Tales RPG experience on the platform. So that's why we were aiming for the "hardcore" gamer market from the beginning. That, and Nintendo themselves specifically asked us to gear the game for a hardcore audience.

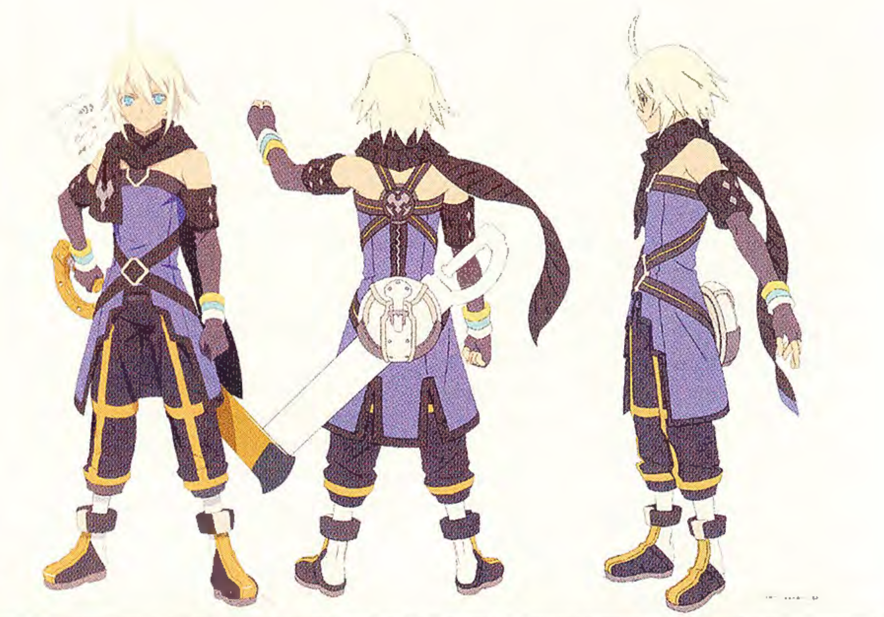
So you didn't make any changes to the original game plan when it became apparent that the Wii was becoming popular to a more casual audience?

TG Considering the Tales series is very much geared toward the hardcore RPG market, we didn't want to betray our fans' expectations. If we were going to use the Tales brand for a casual game, we would rather plan it from the very beginning to appeal to that group, instead of watering down a game that had originally been intended for a hardcore audience. I don't think that would end up pleasing either group.

Good answer! Speaking of changing plans, how do you intend to use the unique abilities of the Wii remote, and how has that changed during the game's development?

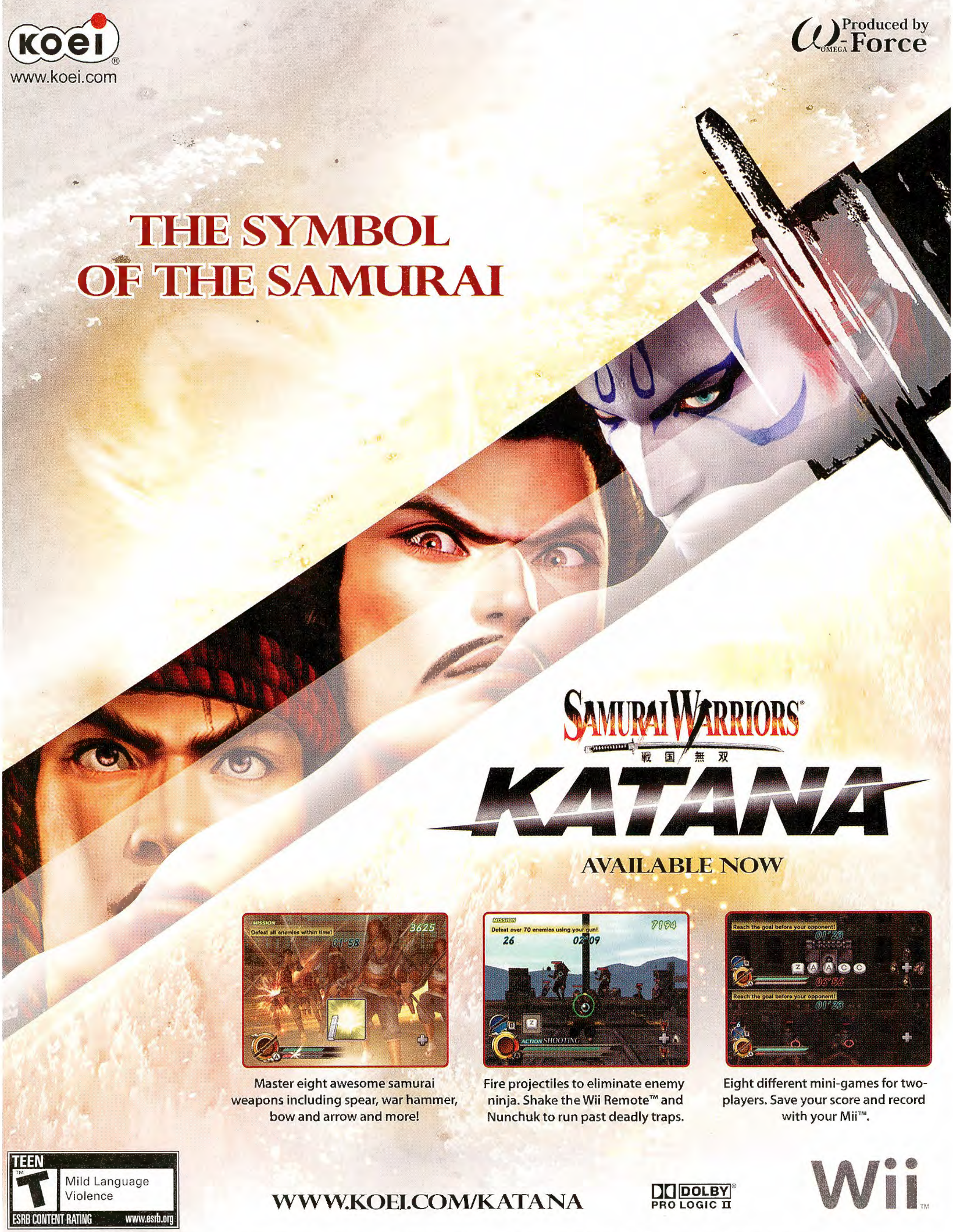
TK We didn't want to make this into a game where you mindlessly wave the Wii remote. We want to make sure that it's a true Tales game, and since the Tales series is known for its battle system, we worried that incorporating a lot of motion control would dumb down the experience. That's why we decided to limit it primarily to activating shortcuts in ways that would not obstruct traditional





EMIL CATAGNIER

Quiet, obedient, and trusting to the point of gullibility, Emil was a nice young man before the Vanguard slaughtered his family in a ruthless attack on Palmacosta. Can he find the strength within his gentle soul to avenge them?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Tales combat.

Of course, we're not totally ignoring the benefits of the Wii remote. For example, one of the classic items in the Tales series is the Sorcerer's Ring, and the way you use it now is by pointing at what you want to shoot with the Wii remote. You can also use the pointer to drag the world map and select your destination.

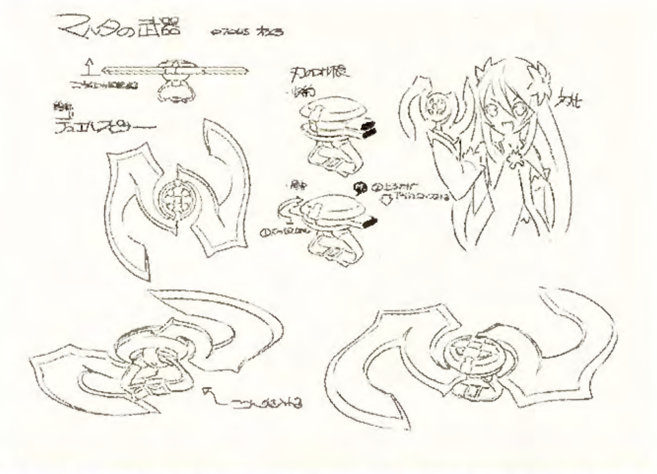
We've heard that you may be seeking to add more motion-control features to the North American version of the game. Can you talk about that?
TG Unfortunately, we can't say anything about that right now.

How much of the original Symphonia team is involved in the development of Dawn of the New World?
TK The scenario writer for Dawn of the New World wrote the original Tales of Symphonia. There are several other members of the design staff who were involved in the original game, but the majority of the staff is new to the series.

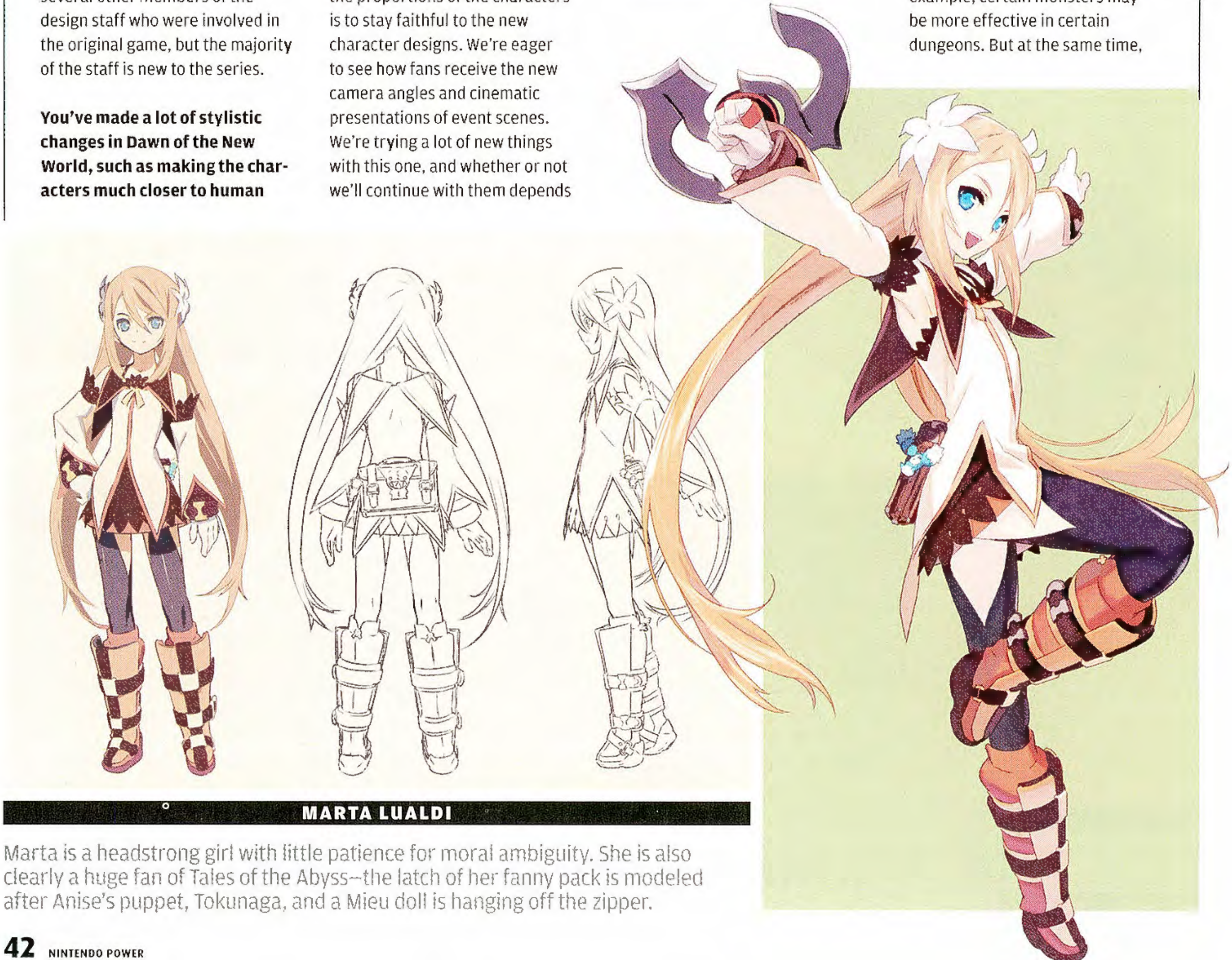
You've made a lot of stylistic changes in Dawn of the New World, such as making the characters much closer to human proportions, and using a lot of close-ups and different camera angles in the event scenes. Is this a new direction for the series, or something unique to this title?
TK The major reason we changed the proportions of the characters is to stay faithful to the new character designs. We're eager to see how fans receive the new camera angles and cinematic presentations of event scenes. We're trying a lot of new things with this one, and whether or not we'll continue with them depends on the fans' reaction.

On that topic, may I ask why you went with a new character designer instead of using Symphonia character designer Kosuke Fujishima again?
TG The truth is, Mr. Fujishima is a very busy man, and he has many different projects going on with many different companies, so he simply couldn't fit it into his schedule. The person in charge of the character designs this time is Daigo Okumura, the art director for Tales of Symphonia and Tales of the Abyss, and this title as well. So while it is unfortunate that Mr. Fujishima was not available, we were happy to give our in-house designers a chance to show their skills.

How do you intend for players to use the monster system? Do you expect players to try to collect all the monsters, or is it more about strategically capturing certain monsters and selecting the right monster party for each dungeon?
TK To put it simply, both. We planned from the beginning to put strategic elements in—for example, certain monsters may be more effective in certain dungeons. But at the same time,


マルタの武器
デュエルスピナー

Marta's "dual spinner" is the latest in a long tradition of unorthodox weapons for Tales heroines. The spinner straps to her wrist and slices foes like a circular saw.



MARTA LUALDI

Marta is a headstrong girl with little patience for moral ambiguity. She is also clearly a huge fan of Tales of the Abyss—the latch of her fanny pack is modeled after Anise's puppet, Tokunaga, and a Mieu doll is hanging off the zipper.

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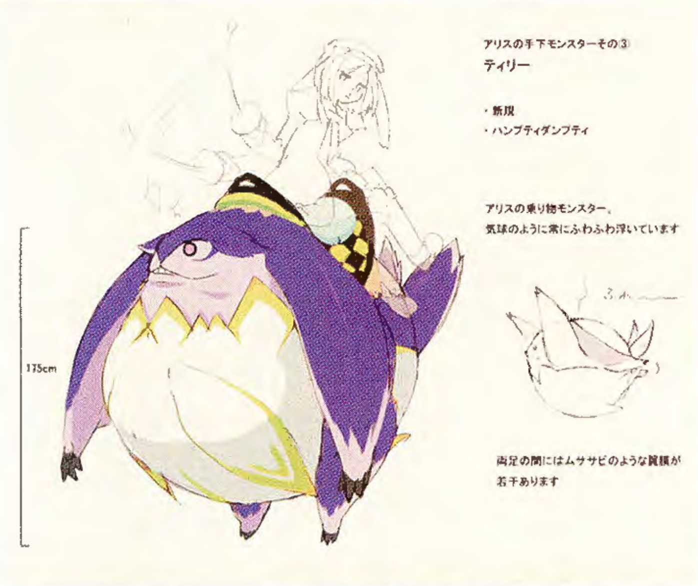
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・新規
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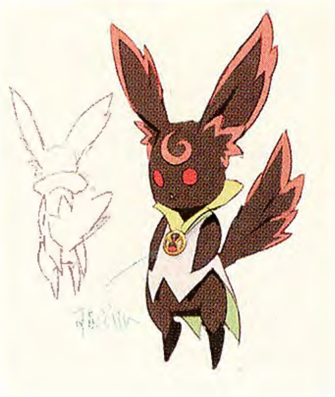
気球のように常にふわふわ浮いています
ふわ
両足の間にはムササビのような皮膜が
若干あります
175cm

There are several as-yet-unrevealed characters on our opening collage, including a mysterious golden-eyed girl (identified as Alice in this design sketch) who can apparently ride giant monsters.



we want the users to collect as many of the monsters as they can. However, it would be very difficult for the user to collect all of the monsters in the game in a single play-through.

One of the fans' favorite aspects of Symphonia was the affection system, which changed certain aspects of the storyline based on how you had the characters treat each other. Will this system be in Dawn of the New World, or will there be any similar ways in which players can make the quest their own?

TK The affection system is actually still in the game, except this time the focus is on the monsters, and the affection between the main character and the monsters in his party. The system does not directly affect the story of Dawn of the New World, but there are side quests that the user can choose to engage in, and instead of linking the story paths to the affection system, we are using the subquests to allow the player to make the quest their own.

The cooking system is another fan favorite. Will the Wonder Chef be returning? What new wrinkles will be featured this time around?

TK The Wonder Chef will be in the game, in the same manner as he was in Symphonia—he'll be hiding all over the world, and will teach you new recipes when you find him. The biggest change is that the cooking system is primarily for the monsters, and not for the player's own party members. By the user cooking certain recipes and feeding them to their monsters, their parameters will change, making them stronger in certain ways or aiding in their evolution.

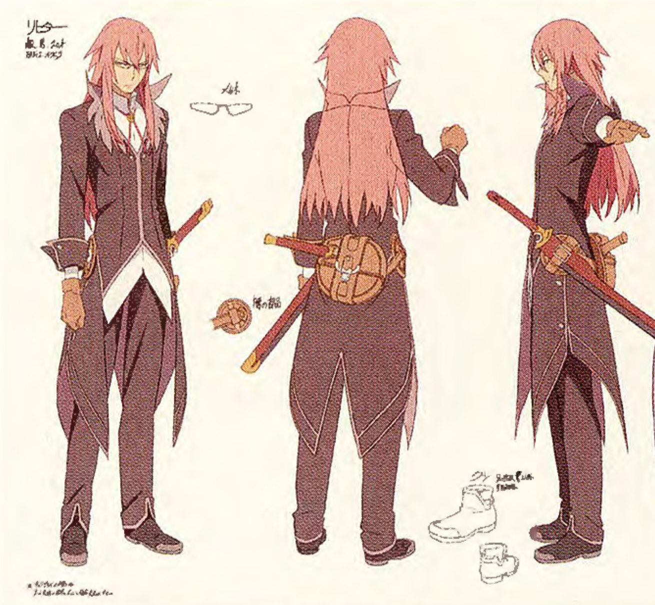
What is the significance of the Knight of Ratatosk in the Japanese version's title? Wasn't Ratatosk, like, a mythological squirrel?

TK Yeah, in Nordic mythology, Ratatosk is a squirrel that lives on Yggdrasill and travels along the branches of Yggdrasill. But the character in Dawn of the New World is not based on that character—we basically just borrowed the name.

The Ratatosk in Dawn of the New World is one of the central pillars of the story. He appeared in Symphonia, but he was not awake at that time, so he didn't have a major role. But he is awakening in Dawn of the New World, and various factions are fighting over how to use his power....

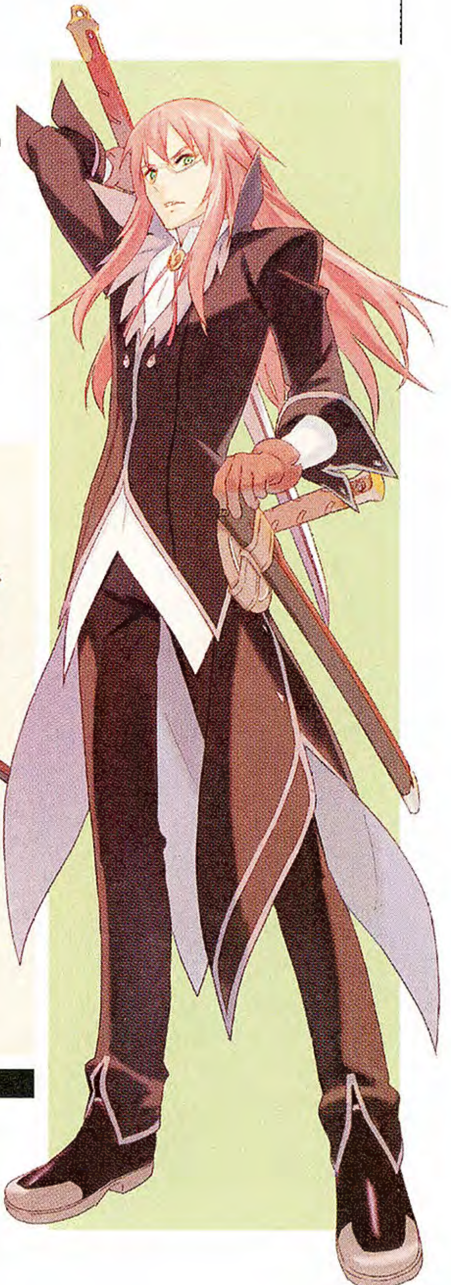
Ratatosk is the one in the story that controls the mana, and the mana affects all the monsters in the game and the world overall. But because Ratatosk is still awakening, the control that he had over all the monsters in the world has not been re-established. And that's why all the monsters in the game are rampaging over the world and causing chaos. So when Emil creates contracts with the monsters, he gradually brings the world back to the way it should be. That's how the monster system ties into the story....

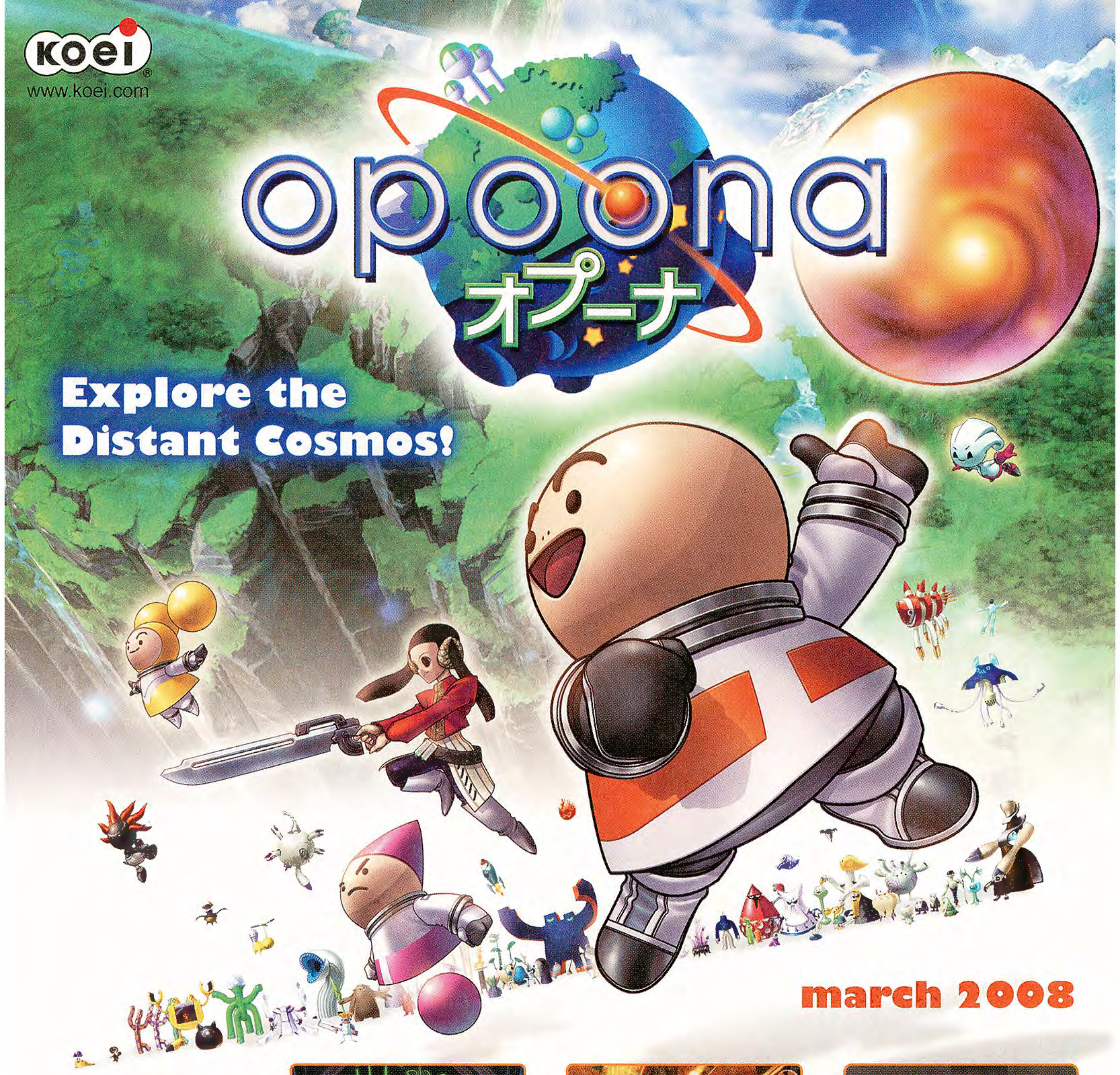
But for some reason every time Emil and his party find a new spirit in the game, Lloyd is in the way and trying to stop them. And that's one of the big mysteries of the game—why is Lloyd, the main character of Symphonia, in conflict with Emil this time?



RICHTER ABEND

Richter's quest to find the Ratatosk Core leads him to our heroes early in the game. He is a harsh judge of character and has little patience for the nebbish Emil, but may still be willing to aid Emil and Marta in their quest.





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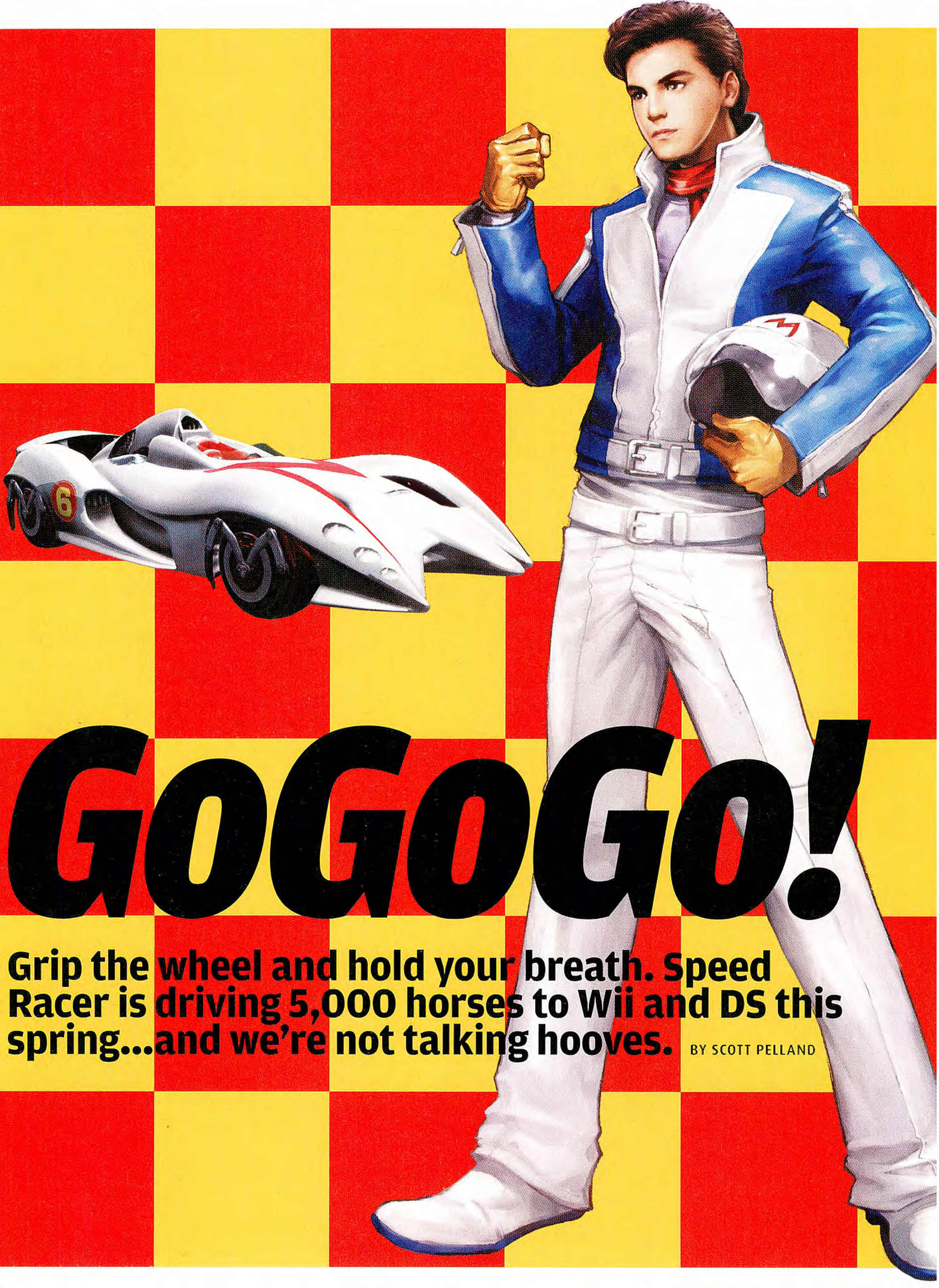


GoGoGo!

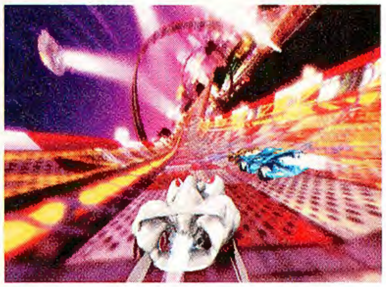
Grip the wheel and hold your breath. Speed Racer is driving 5,000 horses to Wii and DS this spring...and we're not talking hooves.

BY SCOTT PELLAND

To some, racing cars is more like a religion than a sport, and fans of the *Speed Racer* TV series can be counted among them. When the original anime production from the late '60s re-emerged as a Cartoon Network hit three decades later, the stage was set for even bigger things, such as the live-action film written and directed by the Wachowski brothers (*The Matrix*) coming this spring. And these days, when there's a major Hollywood release, there's bound to be a gaming connection. We tracked down Jeff Nachbaur at Warner Bros. Interactive, who is working closely with Sidhe Interactive and Virtuous Games on the development of Speed Racer for Wii and DS, respectively, to take an exclusive look under the hood of the first Mach 5s you and I can actually drive.

Intense racing action on (and off) roller coaster-inspired courses marks the World Racing League experience perfect for Wii. In addition to superfast reflexes, piloting experience may come in handy for drivers.

You'll have to stay clear of the fast lane if you're going to poke along at a mere 270 mph.



How would you describe the type of racing presented in this game?
JEFF NACHBAUR It's set in the world of Speed Racer and that world has some very unique racing. Players are transported to a futuristic racing arena; the tracks are like roller-coaster rides and the cars perform flips, spins, and other unimaginable feats, all while moving at more than 300 MPH. So it's a roller-coaster, arena-based racer with superfast cars that can do kung-fu.

Was Speed Racer designed from the start to use Nintendo's new Wii Wheel? How does it help the feel of the game? And is using the wheel simply one possible control option, or do you feel that it is essential to getting the most out of the experience?
We were already in production when we heard about the Wii Wheel. There were rumors, but the moment it was officially announced we contacted Nintendo and they sent one over. The Wii Wheel definitely changes the feel of the game. It automatically becomes more intuitive. People who have never played racing games before suddenly understand how everything works and it's easy to keep your steering the way it should be. With a lot of games, the sensitivity of the control sticks can be too much or too little. The Wii Wheel eliminates this problem.

You can play without the wheel too. The game developer, Sidhe, set the controls so that players can either hold the Wii remote flat and tilt, similar to Excite Truck, or insert it in the wheel and hold it upright. The remote automatically detects whichever style you are using and adapts, so there's no need to set options; either will work right away. But I personally feel the game is just more fun with the wheel. It really helps to convey the feeling of driving and the control just feels very natural and easy to use.

How do the game's basic controls work?
Well, steering with the Wii Wheel is quite simple. The 2 Button accelerates, the 1 Button brakes, and the B Button activates boost. To jump, you simply jerk the controller up. To smash into opponents (moving suddenly left or right), you just jerk it left or right quickly. We call that *shunting*. And using the Control Pad allows players to change the type of move they are performing during jumps or shunting left and right. For instance, if you hold Down on the Control Pad during a jump, you do a backflip. If the front of your car is just beneath the bumper of the car in front of you when you do this, you'll flip him into the air.

What Speed Racer-like special abilities will the cars have?
Well, the cars have Jack Jumps, so they can fly into the air at any

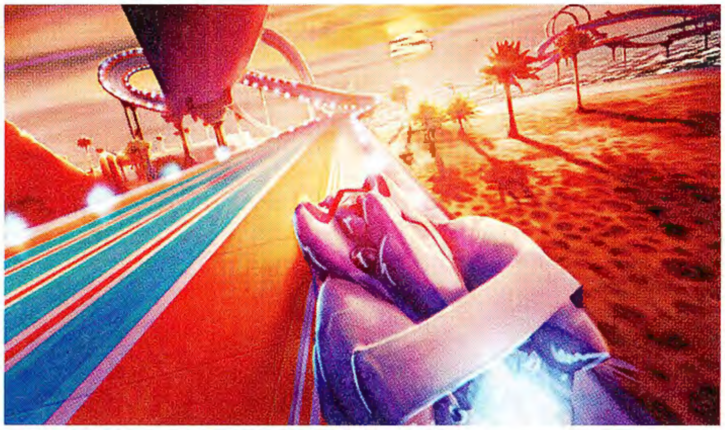
time. However, our cars are the Formula One equivalents in the Wachowskis' Speed Racer world, so they have some extra abilities that the original cartoon cars didn't have.

The cars are called T-180s and in addition to the Jump Jacks, they also have four independently turning wheels that can rotate a full 180 degrees. This allows for some interesting driving since players can be heading forward on the track while the car is facing backward or sideways or spinning. This feature allows players to land just about any jump or stunt and still continue in forward motion. The cars automatically drift around corners without losing speed as well. When combining these abilities with the Jump Jacks and the high speeds, you basically wind up with a car that moves like a kung-fu master—flying through the air, landing strikes, jumping out of the way, and so on.

So, the cars are capable of kung-fu actions, or as we call it Car-Fu. It's something that was in the original cartoon, but the Wachowskis fully realized it for the film and gave the cars the necessary hardware they'd need to pull off those moves.

We can't think of another video game where your wheels can turn sideways—what does this new feature add to the gameplay?
For one, players can block opponents from passing them. But, if they are skilled enough, opponents can always jump over you. Players have the unique ability to pull off all manner of stunts, take sharp turns, smash into the other cars to attack them, and never lose any forward momentum. When players are in first-person mode, they can also take a quick look behind to see what the competition is up to and not miss a beat in moving forward. It's crazy what players can do and how many stunts they are able to pull off on these roller-coaster tracks while race-car wheels are always facing in the necessary direction.

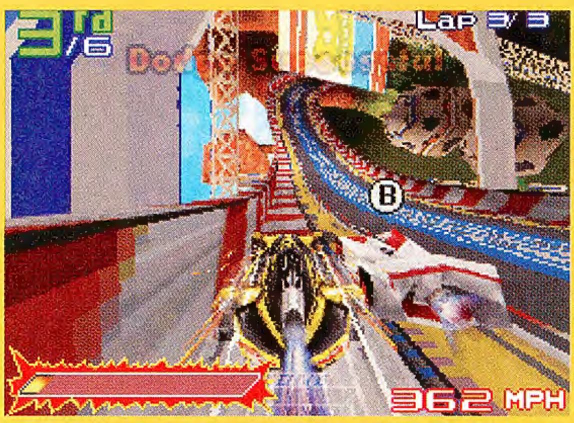
What differences are there between the various cars and race drivers?
Well, each racer/car combo has its own set of stats, including Speed, Acceleration, Handling, and Strength. Speed, Acceleration, and Handling are pretty standard in the racing genre. Strength, on the other hand, determines how much damage you do in Car-Fu. It's sort of a combo of the car's weight and the driver's skill at Car-Fu maneuvers.

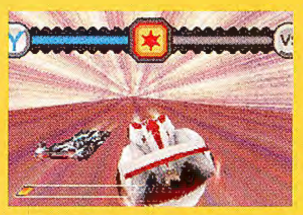


Even with a gorgeous sunset in the background, those looping tracks look scary-hard. Is it just us, or are they missing rails?

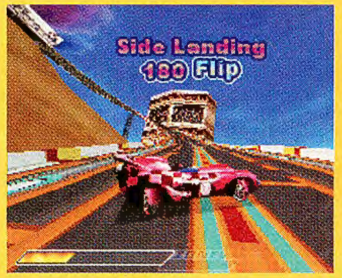
It's Car-ismatic!

Charisma, Car-Fu combat, and extreme speed are the themes you'll find in Speed Racer for DS, slated for a spring 2008 release. During development, the team determined that button control was the way to go on the DS because the action (on the top screen) was just moving too fast for precision touch control. The fully rendered 3-D graphics zip along at an impressive 375 MPH, leaving racers barely enough time to glance down at the touch screen to check game data, such as time remaining, opponent locations on the track, or how well opponents have performed stunts. And even though the game takes some story cues from the upcoming movie, the gameplay is all about racing. The T-180 cars can jump, flip, spin, and attack! But that's just the basics. A mix of Handling, Drifting, Acceleration, Speed, and Charisma stats for each car/driver combo gives players performance styles to choose from. A player who has a combo with high Speed stats may have to brake to avoid trouble in sharp turns while someone with high Drifting stats may not lose any speed at all in the same spots. Charisma is the most interesting and novel attribute; it builds up as you perform stunts, the execution of which gets fans excited, and as more fans cheer you on, you'll earn extra power boosts. With six-player, multicard support, multiple cups, and difficulty levels from Amateur to Pro, Speed Racer for DS has just about everything that a Speed or racing fan could want—except Chim-Chim. We'll have to wait for a sequel before the mischievous ape appears.

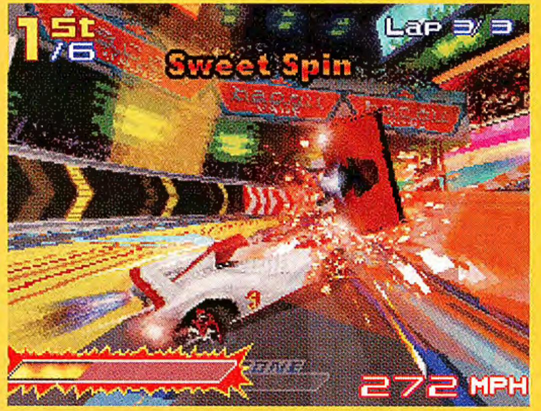




Playing it safe and being a good sport will get you nowhere in what may be the fastest and most furious racing game to ever appear on DS.



3rd/6
Lap 2/3
B
187 MPH



The car's wheels can rotate in any direction to keep you racing forward, but don't think for a second that this will make getting around the tracks easy.

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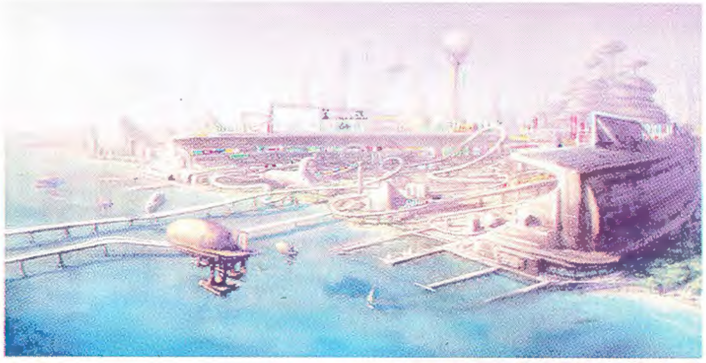
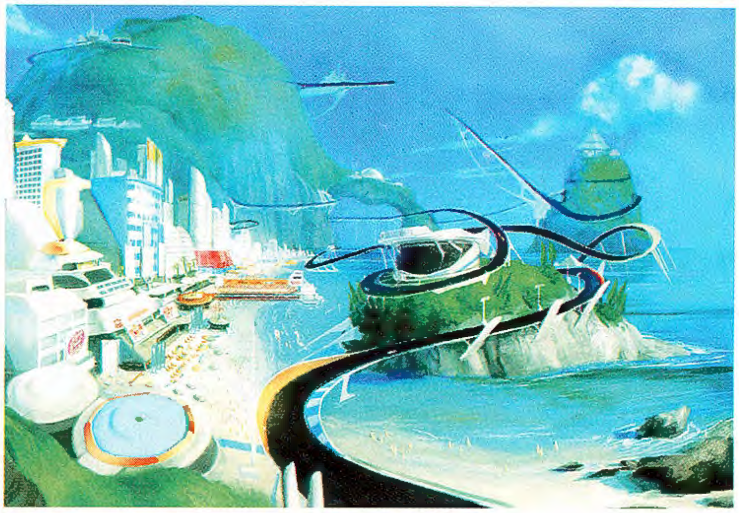
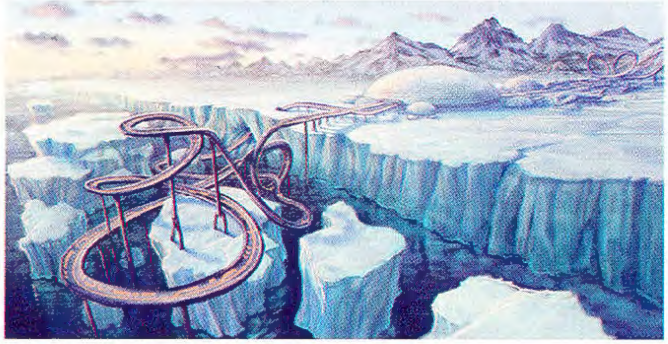




In the future, little matters like gravity and construction costs are of no concern to race-course designers.



What kind of multiplayer action does the game support?
The game supports two-player split-screen. The two-player mode works exactly the same way as single-player, allowing players to unlock everything and compete in the various classes, just as long as one of the players is always finishing in the top three.

What are some of the development team's favorite racing games, and were any an inspiration for Speed Racer? (We noticed that the movie's corkscrew-like tracks make for an F-Zero type of experience.)
Well, our producer [at Sidhe Interactive], Andy, was the producer on Wipeout and Quantum Redshift, and Sidhe has their own franchise, GripShift, as well. Of course, we really like the accessibility and ease of Mario Kart as well and the track design ideas of TrackMania. Just about any racing game we've ever played and enjoyed, including F-Zero, has had some sort of influence on the team. The film was really our biggest influence. When we first saw the racing scenes that the Wachowskis were planning, that is what really spurred the entire game design. It's a rare thing when you see some previews and right away you know it will make a solid, fun game. Then the team had to figure out how to control all of that action. It's one thing to render it up on the screen, but when you have to control it, it becomes a real challenge. And then you go back to those other games and see what controls they've used and try to figure out how you can make it work.

What qualities of the movie and/or the classic cartoon series did you want to come across in the game?
It was important that we really got the tone right. The game, its characters, its visuals...it's all very over-the-top. The characters are larger than life and include everything from the man of few-words, Racer X, to the glam-rock-esque, leather-clad bad man, Snake Oiler. We really wanted to capture the fun of the whole experience. The game is not cute, but just plain fun and really kinda cool, like the TV show. You know there's a layer of kitsch, but you just can't help enjoying it.

Any Chim-Chim monkey business going on in the game?
I wish. One of Andy's (at Sidhe) wish-list items was a Chim-Chim car. We wish we had time for it, but the banana-shaped car didn't get to make it in. We went for a Trixie car instead, figuring we could make her into a real character and not just a novelty. But you never know...perhaps we'll get a chance to realize Andy's dream if we get to do a sequel.

How does the game fit in with the movie storyline?
The game takes place one year after the events of the movie; during the next season of the WRL (World Racing League). We establish this in an opening cinematic and that's about it. The game is then basically a racing game and we designed it to be a racing game, with the look, feel, and gameplay all coming from the racing in the film. So, it's basically an extension of the movie...we just allow players to jump into the world of Speed Racer and have fun.

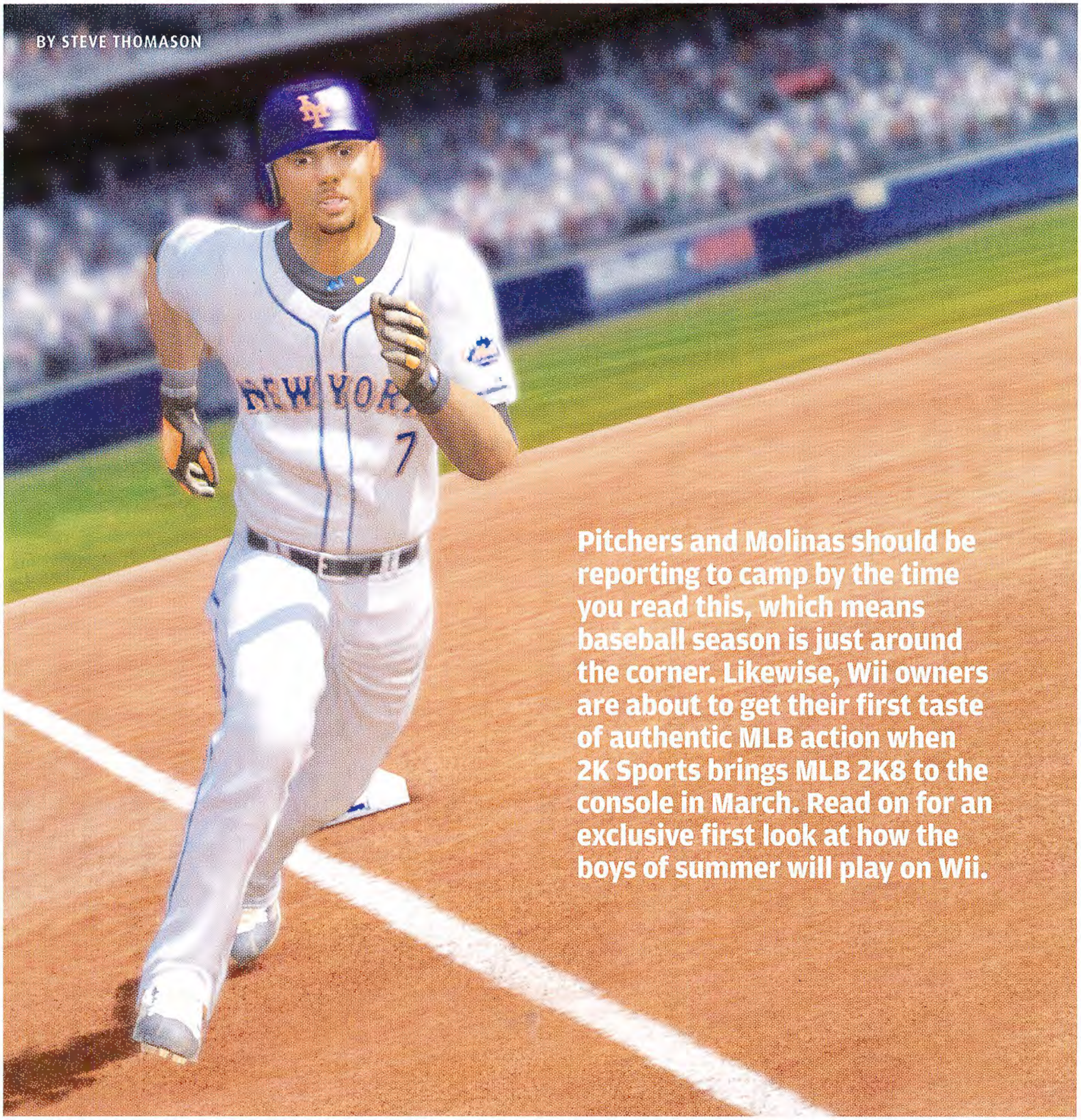
What kind of involvement have you had from actors or other folks involved with the movie?
Well, Matthew Fox, Christina Ricci, and Emile Hirsch all came in to voice their characters. So, Racer X, Trixie, and Speed Racer sound like they do in the movie. From the behind-the-camera folks, John Gaeta, the visual effects supervisor for the film (both this one and the *Matrix* films), played a big part. He met with us regularly, helped shape the visuals, the way the cars move, what sort of things we should do that we hadn't thought of, and generally, just helped us create a cool game. Larry and Andy Wachowski met with us a few times as well to give us feedback about how close we were to the film and their vision. Overall, it was a very collaborative effort with the filmmakers. We adapted their visuals into gameplay, trying to provide a taste of what driving a T-180 race car might be like.

Finally, some gamers are generally cynical about games with movie tie-ins. What would you say to someone who might think twice about trying a movie game?
Well, we avoided a lot of movie-tie-in trends. We decided to use the racing experience of the film as our starting point and just built a game around creating that experience. We kept true to the racing genre and just brought something new to it, instead of trying to re-create a movie experience. Movies and games, despite what many think, are incredibly different mediums. If you want the story and the drama, the movie is what you need. If you want to experience what it might be like to drive a car in the Speed Racer world, well... that's what this game is made for. 90% of all movie tie-in games are action-adventure, content-driven games that try to re-create the movie in some way. Some are good, many aren't. Instead of going down that road, we focused on creating a racing combat game with fun, accessible gameplay. It's all about the race and taking out your opponents. I think that's something fun that doesn't try to replace the movie experience, but instead allows you to live in the same world as the movie and embrace what good games are about. I think that's the true unique feature of this game.

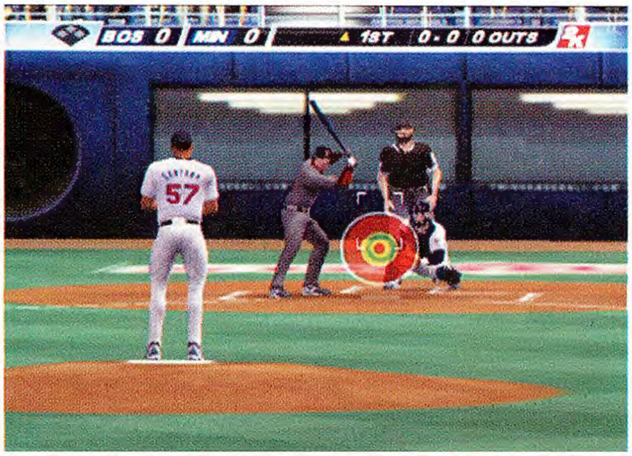
The Wii finally makes it to The Show with its first hardcore baseball sim, MLB 2K8.

PLAY BALL

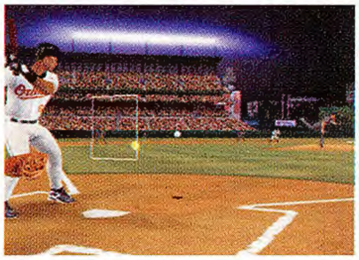
BY STEVE THOMASON

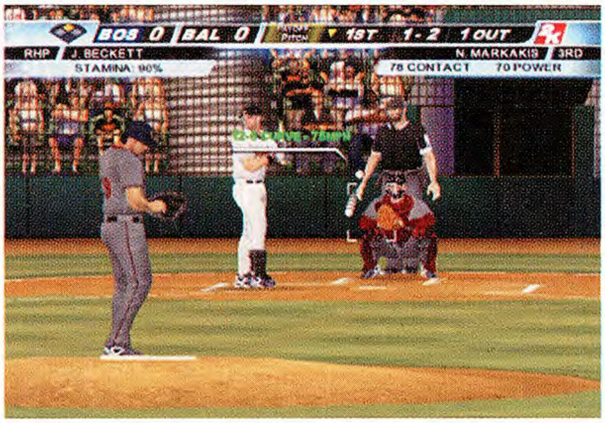


Pitchers and Molinas should be reporting to camp by the time you read this, which means baseball season is just around the corner. Likewise, Wii owners are about to get their first taste of authentic MLB action when 2K Sports brings MLB 2K8 to the console in March. Read on for an exclusive first look at how the boys of summer will play on Wii.



[Above] Detroit's Comerica Park. If you look closely, you can see a knife fight. Oh, we kid the Motor City.





ON THE MOUND

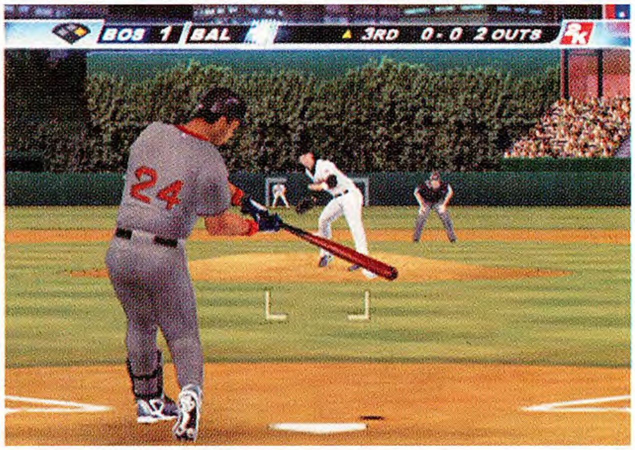
While taking the hill, you point the Wii remote at the screen to select the location of your pitch, then use the analog stick to choose the pitch type. Once you're set, you hold the B Button and tilt the remote back to begin your delivery. A white ring then closes in on your target, and you want to flick the remote forward when the ring crosses into the green. Your timing impacts the accuracy of the pitch, and you'll notice that the ring moves at different speeds depending on the hurler. It's pretty deliberate for pitchers with surgical control like Johan Santana, but you'll need to be quick to throw a pinpoint strike with a wild thing like Daniel Cabrera. If you miss badly, you'll serve up a meatball that your opponent should have little difficulty handling. The speed and movement of the pitch are affected by how quickly you flick the remote. It's bears mentioning, however, that there's a ceiling to what the Wii remote can detect. In other words, there's no need to fling the controller so hard that you'll require Tommy John surgery by the end of a game.

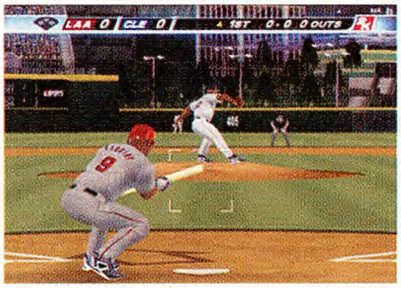
AT THE PLATE

To hit, you hold the Wii remote vertically then swing it like a bat as the pitch nears the plate. Fortunately, you don't have to go through the entire motion; an abbreviated stroke (about 90 degrees) is enough to get the job done. The speed with which you swing the controller determines how much power you'll generate; take a Manny-like rip to swing for the fences, or try to poke it the other way with a softer touch. You can also check your swing by stopping mid-motion, which feels pretty cool when you use it to lay off a bad pitch (and pretty awful when the ball actually crosses the plate for strike three).

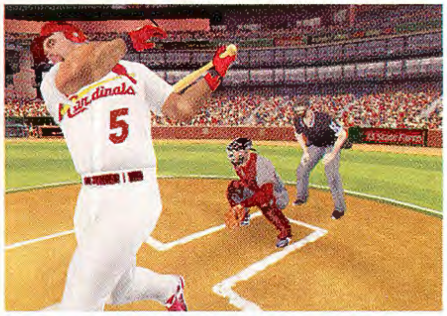
Aiming your swing is handled via the analog stick—tilting down, for instance, will hit the ball on the ground. To unleash your inner Eckstein and lay down a bunt, you simply press the A Button then point the Wii remote in the desired direction. Finally, in a nice little touch that has absolutely no purpose other than to geek out baseball fans, you can gently shake the remote while waiting for the pitch to make your hitter waggle his bat à la Gary Sheffield.

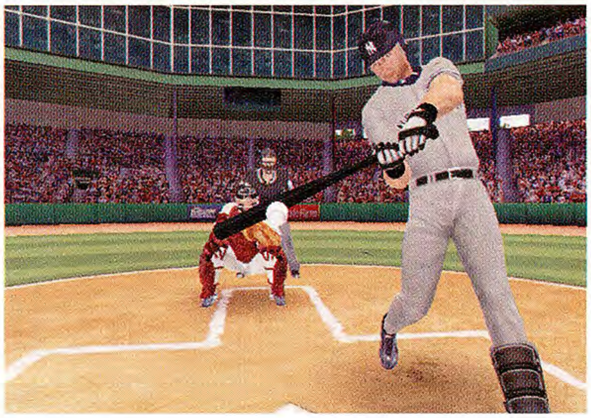
[Above] It looks like Big Papi shed a few pounds during the offseason.





[Left] The Wii remote makes laying down a bunt easier than ever.

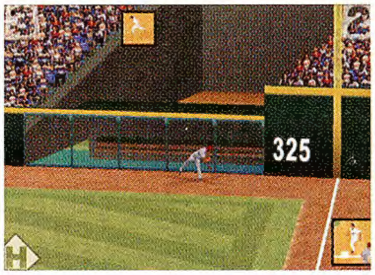




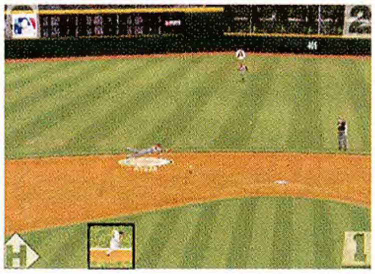
IN THE FIELD

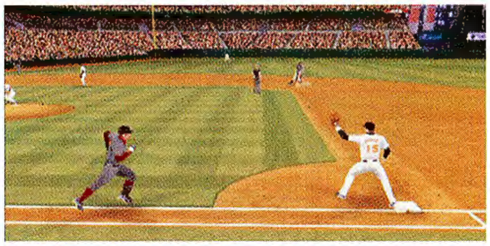
When the ball's hit into play, you'll move your fielder with the analog stick, and you can dive for the ball by flicking the remote. If a ball's about to narrowly clear the fence, a properly timed flick will let you climb the wall and rob your opponent of a home run. Throwing is also accomplished with a simple flick of the controller. The AI typically does a good job of sending the throw to whichever target makes the most sense given the situation (improved fielding AI has been a major focus for the developers with this year's game), but if you prefer to choose your own destination—say Ichiro caught the ball deep but you still want to try gunning down the guy at home plate—just flick the remote while pressing the corresponding base on the Control Pad (or B to hit the cutoff man).

Though not a Wii-specific mechanic, a neat little addition nonetheless is that pressing the 1 Button while chasing a fly ball will wave off any other fielders in the vicinity so as to avoid a collision. You don't want your guys looking like Carlos Beltran, after all.



[Above] Vlad don't need no stinkin' cutoff man. With that cannon, he could probably gun down the runner from the next zip code.
[Below] Aybar gets dirty.

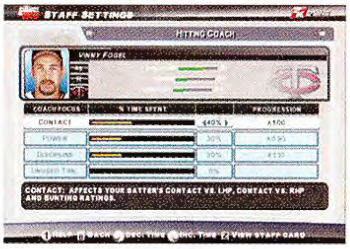




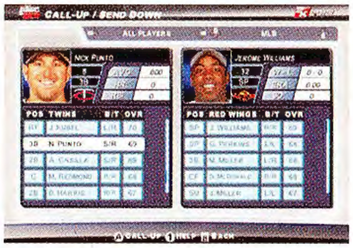
ON THE BASE PATHS

While running the bases, you can drum the Wii remote and nunchuk to make your player hustle, thus giving him an extra burst of speed. The developers hope the extra interactivity will make base running more fun, but baseball purists needn't worry about this element putting the game into arcade territory; you won't get Prince Fielder moving much faster than a wounded cow no matter how quickly you pump the controllers. You have a hand in sliding into base, as well—thrust the remote and nunchuk forward to hit the dirt.

IN THE FRONT OFFICE


STAFF SETTINGS
HITTING COACH
VINNY FOGEL
COACH FOCUS
% TIME SPENT
PROGRESSION
CONTACT
POWER
DISCIPLINE
UNUSED TIME
VIEW STAFF CARD

CONTACT: AFFECTS YOUR BATTER'S CONTACT VS. LHP, CONTACT VS. RHP AND BUNTING RATINGS.


CALL-UP / SEND DOWN
ALL PLAYERS
MLB
NICK PUNTO
JEROME WILLIAMS
POS TWINS B/T OVR
POS RED WINGS B/T OVR
3B N. PUNTO S/R 69
CALL-UP
HELP
BACK

[Right] If you're playing Franchise mode with the Minnesota Twins, your first duty is to get rid of Nick Punto. I don't care how "scrappy" he is.

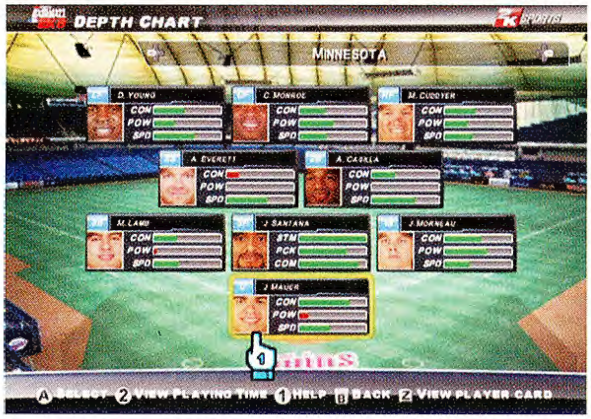
For aspiring general managers, MLB 2K8's Franchise mode gives you as much to do off the field as on it. A wide variety of roster- and team-management options are available to you, and making the right moves can mean the difference between a championship dynasty and a perennial cellar-dweller. Of course, money plays a huge role in pro ball, and how much you'll have to work with depends on which team you choose. If you're heading the Yankees, you can just throw cash at the best free agents available, but an organization with limited funds (like the Twins) needs to focus on developing its own talent. To that end, you'll be able to manage both your Triple A and Double A rosters, and your scouts will occasionally make recommendations for signing new prospects. (Unfortunately, you can't actually play with minor league teams in the Wii version of the game).

You'll also oversee your coaching staff, which can have a dramatic impact on player performance. A manager with good motivational skills, for instance, will do a better job of calming pitchers during mound visits, while a skipper with a Bobby Cox-like temper may get ejected before he even reaches the hill. If you're the kind of GM who likes to micromanage, you can even determine which areas—plate discipline, pitch selection, etc.—each coach spends the most time on during practice.

More than any other sport, baseball is a game of probabilities. To make the odds work in your favor, you can purchase reports from the Inside Edge scouting service that reveal the tendencies of individual players. If you've got the report on a position player, your catcher will call locations and pitches based on the hitter's known weaknesses, and your defense will automatically put on the proper shift. For a pitcher, the report will show you the three most likely locations of his next pitch. The information is invaluable, but because it comes at a price, you have to determine which players or teams present your squad with the biggest challenges.

You also have to deal with the human element. Each player's morale affects his performance, and can change depending on things like team chemistry, contract negotiations, and playing time. Of course, moving one player up in the batting order is gonna upset the guy he's replacing. It's a delicate balancing act, but there's not a baseball fan alive that doesn't think he could do a better job than most real-life GMs.

And that's what the game is all about—providing that authentic, fully realized MLB experience. The lack of online functionality is a disappointment, but we're excited to finally have a Wii baseball game that we can really sink our teeth into. Now if you'll excuse us, we've only got a few weeks left to work on our swing before Opening Day.


DEPTH CHART
MINNESOTA
D. YOUNG
C. MONROE
M. CUDDYER
A. EVERETT
A. CASILLA
M. LAMB
J. SANTANA
J. MORNEAU
J. MAUER
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HELP
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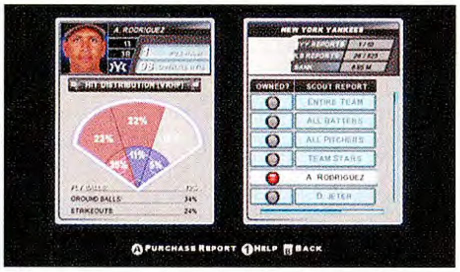
A. RODRIGUEZ
HIT DISTRIBUTION (VRHP)
22%
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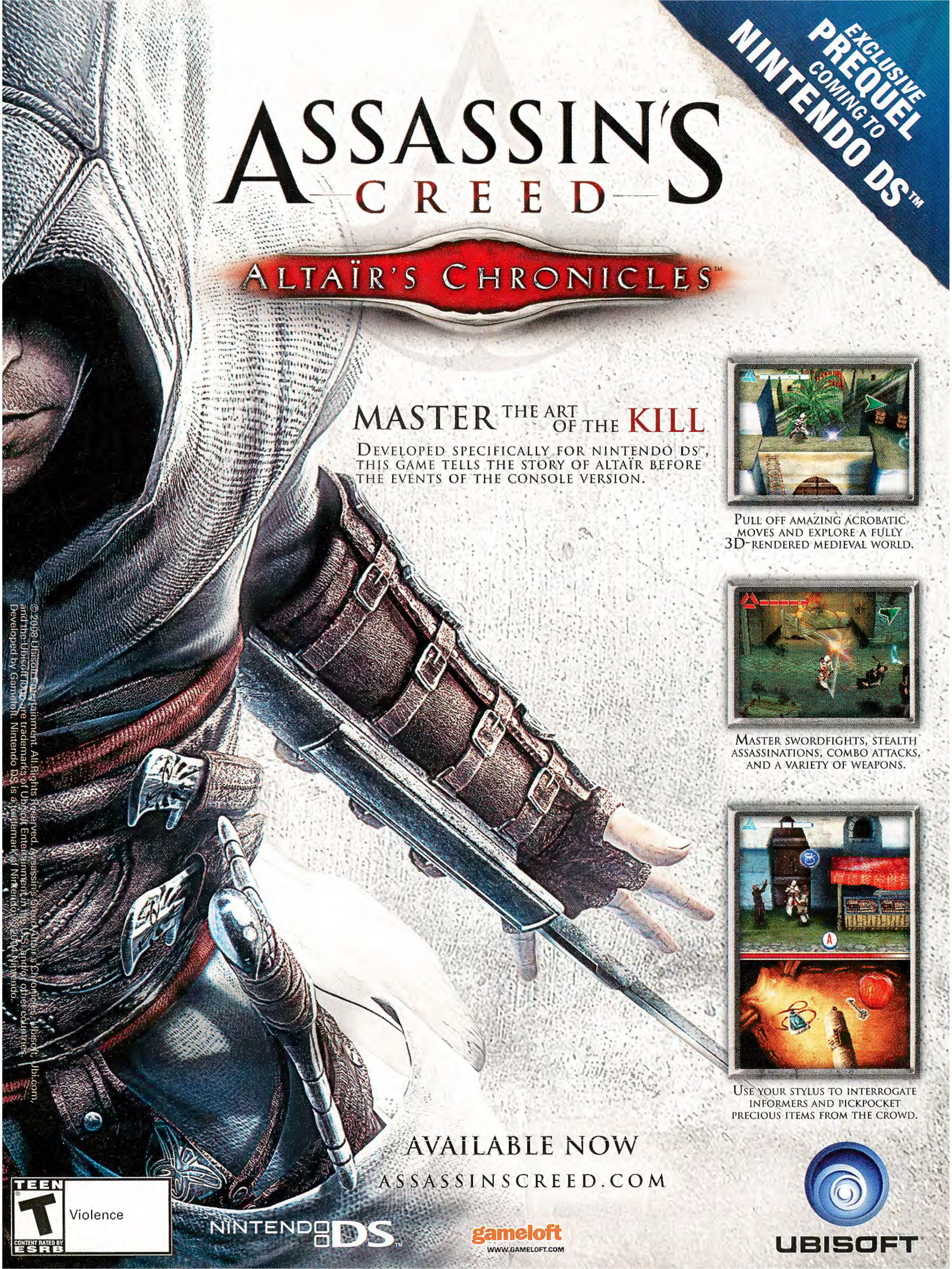
11%
GROUND BALLS 34%
STRIKEOUTS 24%
NEW YORK YANKEES
OWNED?
SCOUT REPORT
ENTIRE TEAM
ALL BATTERS
ALL PITCHERS
TEAM STARS
A. RODRIGUEZ
D. JETER
PURCHASE REPORT
HELP
BACK

[Above] A-Rod's scouting report. The CliffsNotes version—unless you're a Yankees fan, there's a high likelihood that he's going to ruin your day.



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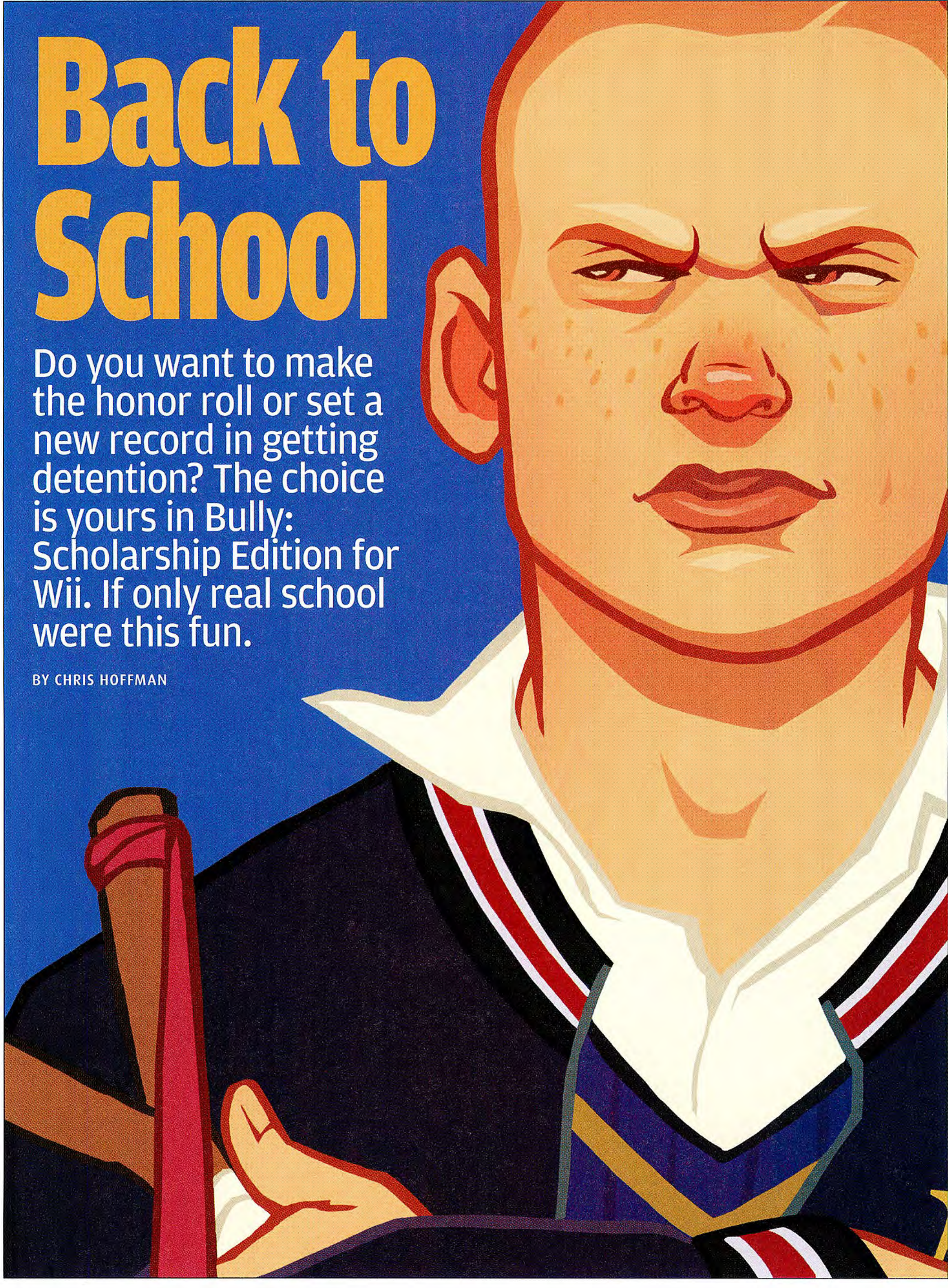
Back to School

Do you want to make the honor roll or set a new record in getting detention? The choice is yours in Bully: Scholarship Edition for Wii. If only real school were this fun.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



The title of Rockstar Games's Bully is something of a misnomer. Though the game's freckle-faced 15-year-old protagonist, Jimmy Hopkins, isn't exactly a paragon of virtue, he's more likely to defend weaker kids from bullies than bully them himself.

Then again, if you'd rather have Jimmy dish out wedgies than prevent them, so be it—that's the beauty of Bully; many of the choices are completely up to you. Jimmy may not be attending Bullworth Academy of his own accord (his mom and his new step-dad sent him there so they could go on a yearlong honeymoon overseas), but what he does after he gets there is for you to decide.

"It's open-world," explains producer Jeronimo Barrera. "You're given a lot of choices. You can be as good a kid as you want and just go to the classes and do that, or you can be truant and go off and cause as much mischief as you want. It's really up to the player."

Originally released for the PlayStation 2 in late 2006, Bully went on to sell nearly 2 million copies worldwide on the aging hardware. The game's success was due to many factors, including the go-anywhere, do-anything formula, the solid and varied action-adventure gameplay, and the unique New England-style boarding-school setting.

"Unlike some of our other games, everybody has a perspective on this," muses Barrera. "Everybody's either in school or has gone to school, so I think... there's something in it for everybody. There's a humor that I think only adults will get and then there's the stuff that 12-year-old boys will love. Or [since it's rated Teen] I should say 14-year-old boys."

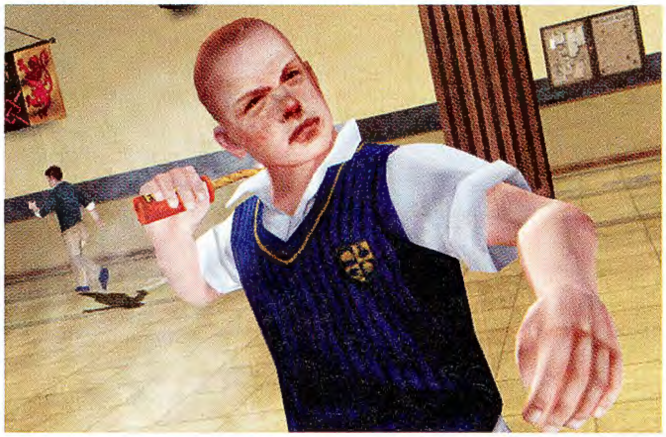
The Wii version of Bully, dubbed Bully: Scholarship Edition, delivers the same convincing world and award-winning narrative as the PS2 version, but enhances it in a number of ways to deliver an experience that's even more compelling. New missions, new classes, and, of course, motion-based Wii controls are all on the schedule.

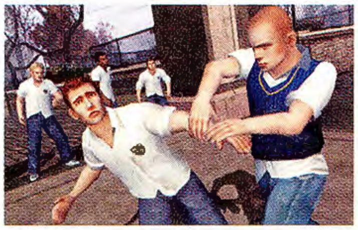
"We didn't want to make it a port," Barrera says. "That wasn't what we wanted to do. So the first thing was, 'How do we create more content that fits within the world and it fits right?' not just like, 'Oh, let's add a bunch of minigames' or something like that.... This game obviously fits well on the Wii because it's an interesting action-adventure game. There's nothing like it."

Making the Grade

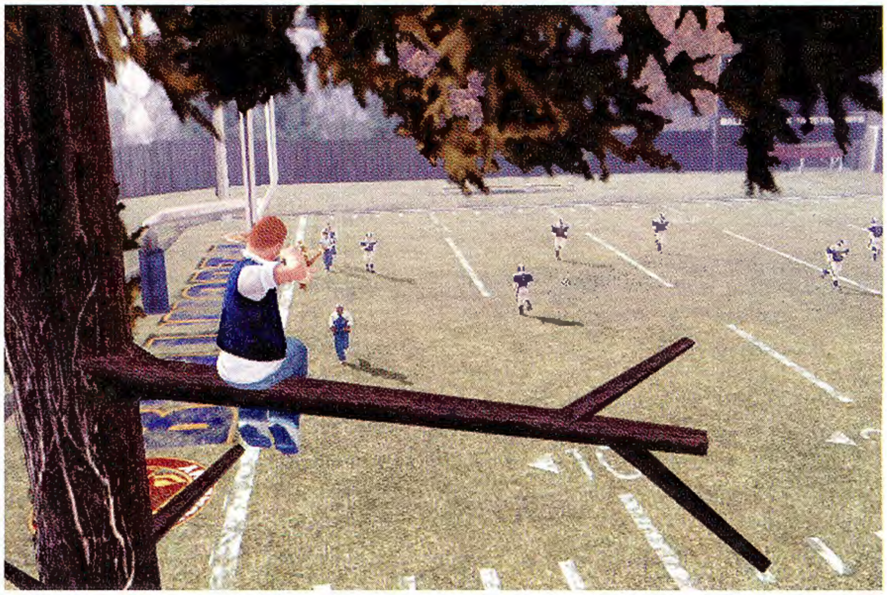
Although there's a lot to do in the world of Bully, your choices at first are somewhat limited. Early on, you'll spend most of your time familiarizing yourself with the school's grounds and its numerous cliques. The bullies, naturally, love tormenting other students (especially new transfers like Jimmy); the privileged preppies hang out at their overpriced accommodations espousing pompous philosophy about their place in society; the nerds spend most of their time playing pencil-and-paper RPGs in the library; the greasers—complete with '50s fashion sense—loiter near the school's auto shop, where they can work on their rides; and the jocks, not surprisingly, are usually found in the gym or on the football field. Then there are the loners like bitter sociopath Gary Smith and hapless Pete Kowalski, who seem to represent opposite extremes of the student body; you'll cross paths with them many times during the school year.

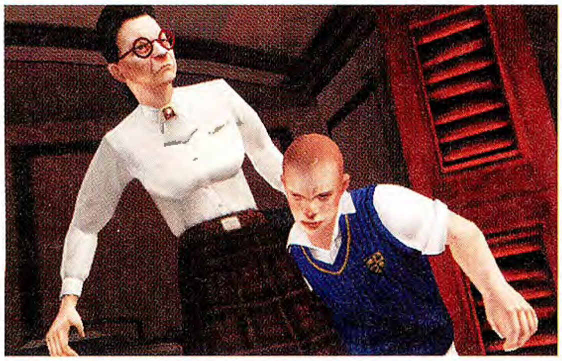
As detestable as some of the students and cliques seem to be, the key to surviving Bullworth Academy is to earn their respect, which you'll do as you complete the game's wide array of missions (some required, some optional). A small map in the upper-right corner of the screen helps you keep track of your surroundings and shows you the locations of available missions. Once you initiate a mission, you'll find yourself faced with any number of situations: helping other students avoid a bully beatdown, finding radio transistors for a vagrant,





Ya wanna be starting something? If so, it's your call. Just don't get caught or you'll wind up with detention.





Girls, girls, girls. Jimmy doesn't look like a ladies' man, but he can win a lot of hearts at Bullworth Academy.

retrieving class notes stolen by a self-important cheerleader, breaking into the school's boiler room, or pulling pranks on the Bullworth faculty. Eventually you'll even get to go on dates and sneak into the girls' dormitory.

Early missions also ease you into the game's controls. The basic scheme is fairly traditional; while you move Jimmy using the Control Stick on the nunchuk, you run by holding the A Button on the remote and you sprint by tapping A repeatedly. Pressing left or right on the Control Pad rotates the camera, pressing down on the Control Pad lets you jump or climb onto ledges, and the B Button is used for a variety of actions, such as throwing. Wii's unique gesture-based controls come into play in specific situations, such as when you're firing a slingshot from a first-person perspective (in which you aim by simply pointing at the screen), or engaging in some recreational boxing (in which you punch and block by mimicking real boxing motions).

"When we did this thing we wanted it to have variety," Barrera notes. "That was our whole goal. And with the Wii remote and nunchuk control, it kind of opened up not just the stuff that we had before, but some of the new games that we've added to it or the new mechanics. I think it's a very nice fit. But then again, we didn't want to overdo it. This is a pretty long game; the average player's going to spend 20 to 40 hours on this. We didn't want them breaking too much of a sweat. I think it's fairly accessible."

No matter how good of a student you're trying to be, the need to fight comes up pretty often at Bullworth Academy, and in this regard the Wii controls are also up to the task. Unlike in the PS2 game, which had you mashing on a single attack button to fight, you brawl in the Wii version by swinging the remote for your right fist and the nunchuk for your left fist, and alternate between the two to execute combos. The Z Button lets you grapple (allowing you to pummel opponents or shove them to the ground), and you can throw mounted punches by thrusting the remote and nunchuk forward, then swinging away. And that's just for starters; you'll learn new fighting moves as you progress through the game, plus when the going gets tough you can use an assortment of weapons, including stink bombs, itching powder, firecrackers, and a bottle-rocket launcher.

Violence isn't without consequences, however. Whenever you break the rules (by fighting, vandalizing property, breaking into lockers, ditching class, or violating curfew, for example), your trouble meter increases, thus drawing the ire of nearby authority figures. Prefects, teachers, and even the police will try to put a stop to any illicit behavior (and they often *will* overpower you), which usually results in a trip to Principal Crabblesnitch's office, or worse: detention. Though detention isn't as lousy as it is in real life, you have better things to do than mow the campus lawn or shovel snow.

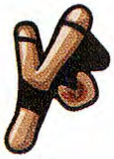
Luckily, there are other methods of interacting with people besides fighting—you can socialize with them in a number of ways. Apologizing can get the authorities off your case for minor infractions, and a little cash will go a long way toward appeasing a bully. Play your cards right, and you can even get some smooches from a number of would-be girlfriends (you know, if you don't mind the cooties).

Loads of Bull

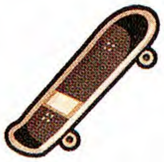
Of course, since you're at school, you've also got classes to attend

TROUBLEMAKING TOOLS

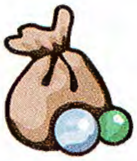
In most schools you need books, binders, pencils, and paper. At Bullworth Academy you'll need a small cache of weapons and other items if you hope to make it to graduation day. Here are a few that you'll come across during your, um, studies.



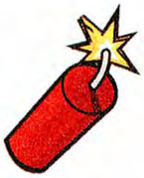
Slingshot
One of the earliest weapons you obtain, the slingshot is great for pelting enemies from a distance. It has unlimited ammo and you can upgrade it into a Super Slingshot.



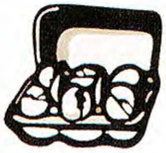
Skateboard
Why walk when you can skate? The skateboard is handy for getting you around the campus and neighboring areas fast. You can even use it to skitch on the back of cars.



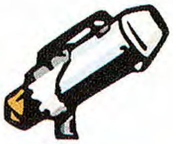
Marbles
Marbles are an excellent way to escape prefects and other authority figures. Just toss some behind you while you're running to make your pursuer fall on his keister.



Firecrackers
Firecrackers are fairly powerful and have a wide range of attack. If you want to cause some mischief, try dropping one in the toilet.

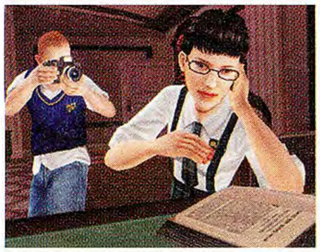


Eggs
As far as weapons go, eggs aren't very strong (they merely stun enemies for a second), but they're ideal for pulling pranks. Walls and unsuspecting students, beware!



Spud Launcher
Despite its lack of speed and limited ammo capacity, the potato-firing spud launcher is one of the most powerful weapons in the game. You'll get it fairly late in the school year.

After you acquire the camera, you can use it to complete missions, take yearbook photos, or snap pictures for fun.



(unless you opt to play hooky). As in the original Bully, you can take English, chemistry, art, photography, gym, and shop class, plus you can partake in four all-new subjects: biology, geography, math, and music. Successfully completing each class powers up your character, letting you create stink bombs with your chemistry set, learn improved social skills, or gain access to a bicycle, for instance.

"One of the things that happened in the original [is that] if you did play just going to classes, you could do all the classes, get superpowered...and then you didn't really have to go to school anymore," Barrera states. "Now that we're filling it out with more classes, it adds another level of challenges so you're not sort of stuck without anything to do."

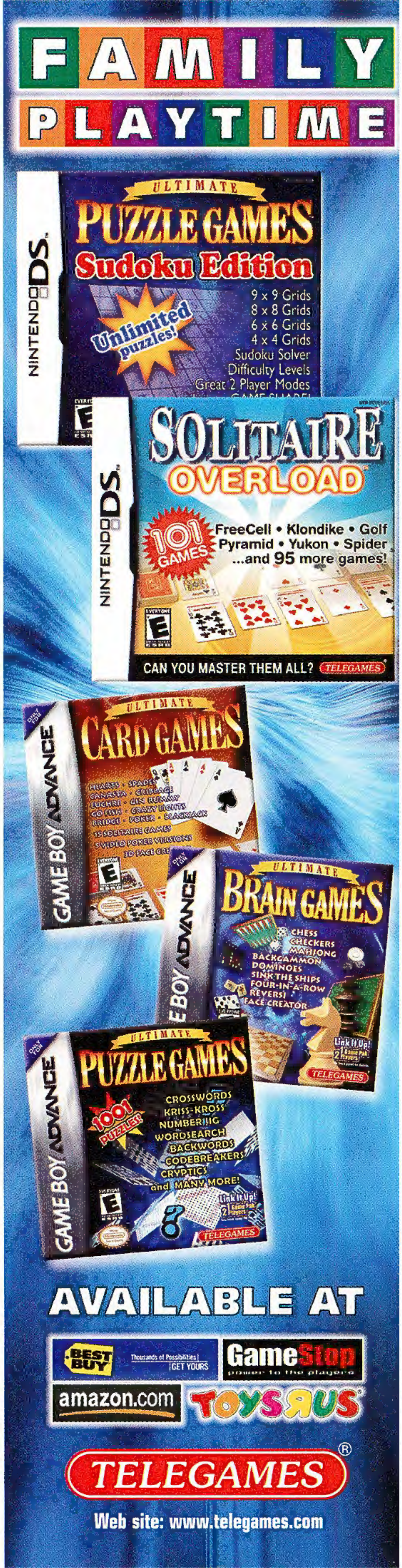
Each class plays out as a minigame, many of which are specifically tailored to the Wii's controls. In chemistry and shop you press designated buttons and move the remote and nunchuk to complete assignments; in gym you use remote-based gestures to play dodgeball; in geography you match up flags with the appropriate country or state; in math you answer questions or solve simple equations; in biology you use an assortment of tools to dissect animals; and in music you shake the remote and nunchuk in sync with authentic marching tunes performed by an actual band.

As you advance through the school year, you'll gain access to various nearby areas—including Bullworth Town, the suburbs of Old Bullworth Vale, the rundown neighborhood of New Coventry, and Blue Skies Industrial Park—which provide further opportunities for missions and extracurricular activities. Among the tasks you can undertake: spying on a greaser's unfaithful girlfriend, wreaking havoc on a teacher's private residence, invading the nerds' off-campus hideout, spray-painting clique signs around the town, exploring a derelict tenement building, and going shopping to help the school chef look seductive (good luck with that one!).

Scholarship Edition even features eight missions that weren't in the PS2 game. As Barrera explains, "There's a lot of characters that we wanted to explore a little bit deeper, and I think we've been able to get a chance to do that [with the new missions]. We also introduce some new characters. One of the other things we did is that there are seasons throughout the game, and we were able to do more with those. In the original, basically for wintertime, you got your sweater and that was it. Now there's actually more missions."

At least two of the new missions involve a character called Hobo Santa; in the Balls of Snow mission you must aim at the screen with the Wii remote to pelt troublemakers with snowballs at Hobo Santa's request, and in the Miracle on Bullworth St. mission you need to destroy a fake Santa's holiday display and

Bullworth Academy is just like any other school. You go to class, hide from prefects in lockers...you know, the usual stuff.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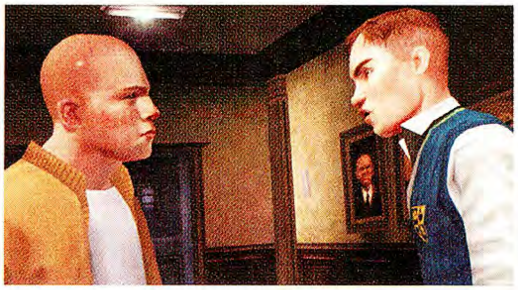
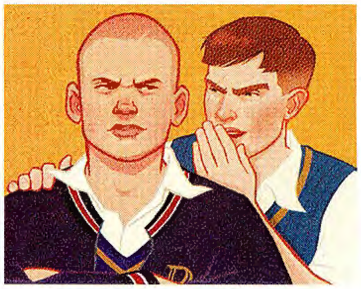
lay the smack down on his elves.

There are loads of optional nonmission tasks to undertake, too. You can play arcade games, earn money by delivering papers or mowing lawns, scour the city for collectibles such as rubber bands and trading cards, compete in go-kart races, try to take everyone's photo for the school yearbook, and more. Almost every NPC has some sort of optional errand for you to run, whether it's as benign as a fetch quest or as mischievous as pulling a fire alarm. You can even customize Jimmy with new haircuts, outfits, and accessories (including 50 new articles of clothing exclusive to Scholarship Edition). There's a lot to do and even more to see in the massive world, which is nearly five square virtual kilometers in size.

"You have to explore every single square!" says Barrera. "There's this guy dressed like a pirate on an island if you swim out to it. There's a crazy hobo behind the school who's...trying to build a communications apparatus to contact aliens. There's the whole insane asylum that you have to sneak/break into. You find shortcuts from the school out to various locations."



Say hello to Gary Smith. You'll conspire with him in single-player mode and compete against him in multiplayer.



A Class of Its Own

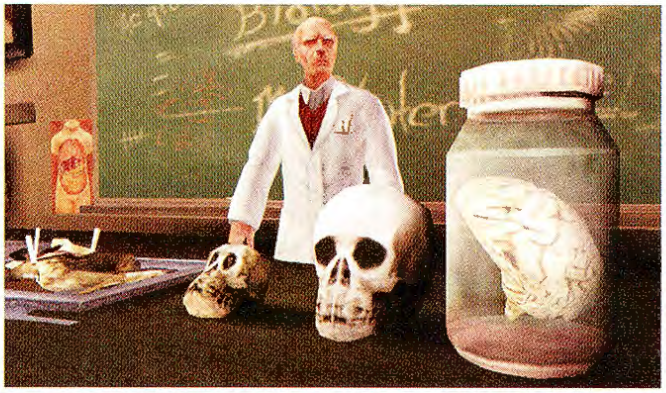
Since you'll potentially be spending a lot of time exploring the world of Bully, the developers have taken steps to ensure that everything looks good as you do it. While maintaining the stylized, somewhat cartoony art direction of the original game, the folks at Rockstar have doubled or quadrupled most textures' resolution and range of colors, altered the geometry of some models to make them look better, and implemented a technique called bilinear filtering to make textures look smoother from a distance. They've also added more-realistic lighting, shadows, and reflections, and implemented 480p progressive scan support. "If you really do a side-by-side comparison, it's almost night and day," comments Barrera on the differences between the Wii and PS2 versions.

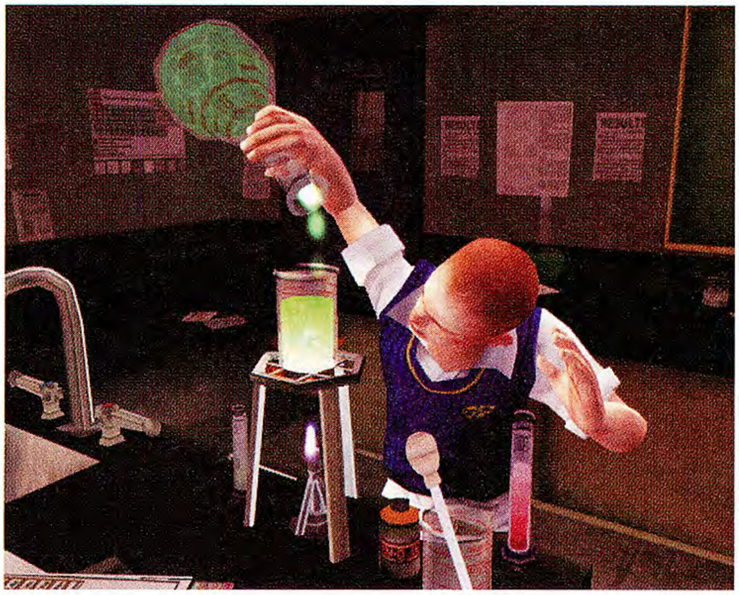
The improvements also extend to the sound. "Since we have a bit more memory to work with, you hear a lot more in the world, since the dialogue fires off more precisely than it did on the PlayStation 2," Barrera notes. "I think that we offer enough that [for] people who played the game on the PS2 and now have moved onto the Wii, it's definitely worth it."

On top of aesthetic enhancements, Bully: Scholarship Edition adds an entirely new feature—two-player versus competition. Available from the get-go (no unlocking necessary), the multiplayer mode lets one player assume the role of Jimmy and another control schoolmate Gary as they battle it out in 10 minigames. Most of the games are based on the single-player classroom activities (biology, math, photography, etc.), but a few are based on more arcadelike pursuits (such as a shooting gallery). You can choose which games you compete in, with the selection left to the loser of the previous round.

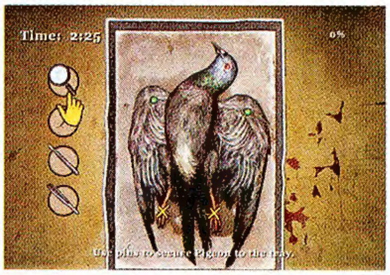
With new modes and extra content added on top of what was already a deep single-player adventure, Bully: Scholarship Edition should have no problem living up to Rockstar's intentions of being much more than a typical port, or introducing a whole new audience to the fun of attending a school of hard knocks.

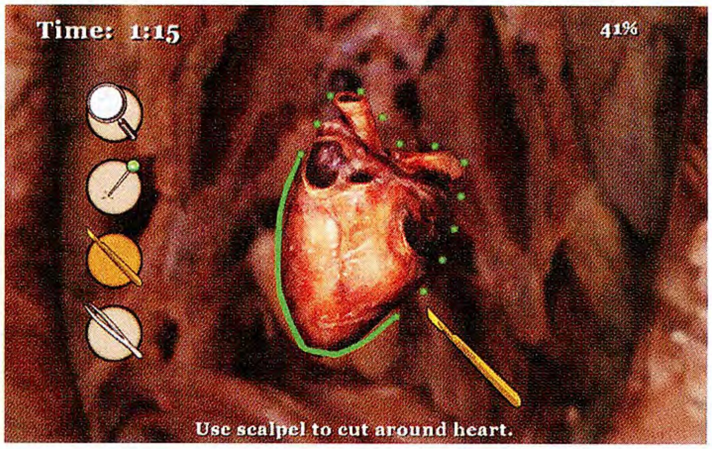
"We definitely love this franchise," Barrera asserts. "It's an amazing game and something that I think all gamers should play, because it showed a lot of people that...you can make games about a lot of different things. It doesn't always have to be space aliens and pirates and stuff like that. It could be a school kid.... You can make games out of really unique subject matter, and if you're passionate about what you do, it always turns out great."





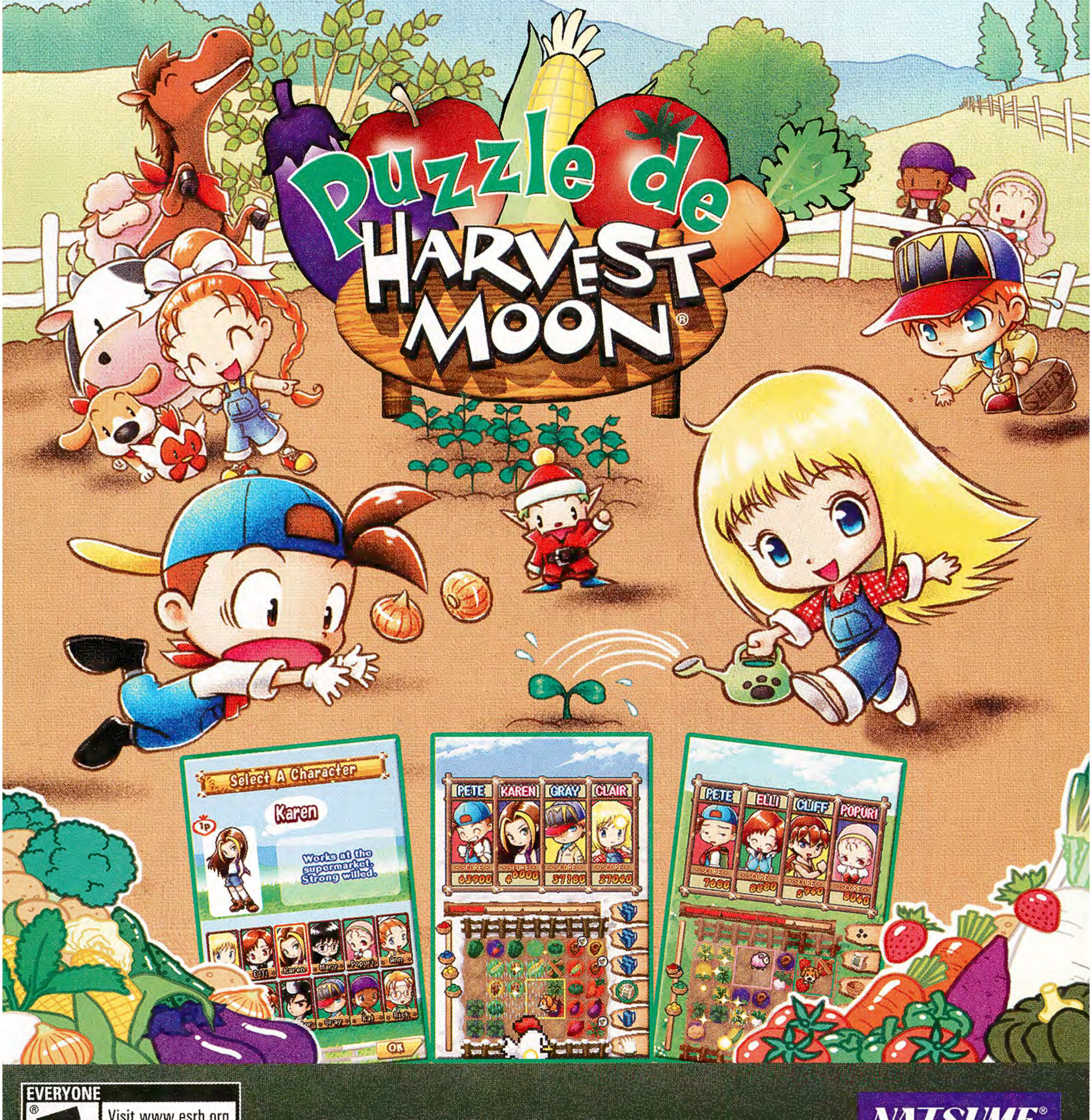
No, this isn't the school cafeteria; these are the motion-based minigames you'll play in biology and chemistry.





Do you have a Green Thumb?

Puzzle de Harvest Moon is a fast-paced, highly addictive puzzle game where you grow and harvest crops competing against your favorite Harvest Moon characters!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Ann
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2007 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS

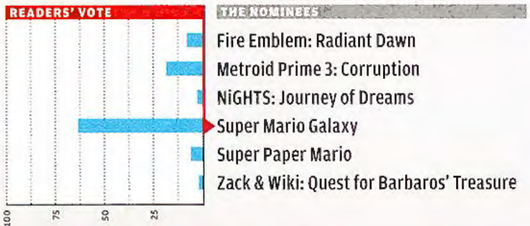
They're not as glitzy as the Oscars and not as world-changing as Super Tuesday, but the Nintendo Power Awards are always good for a little controversy, especially when the NP staffers' picks clash with those of our faithful readers. We all agreed on the winners in the biggest categories, but as you'll see in the following pages, some races brought out wildly different opinions.

Wii GAMES 🟦

DS GAMES 🟧

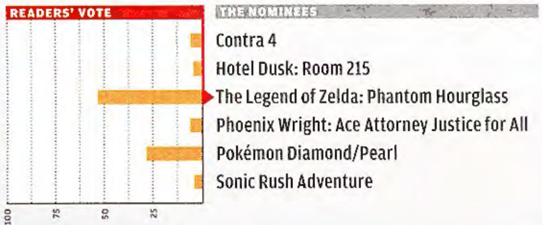
Wii Game of the Year:
Super Mario Galaxy

This one was no contest. The mix of Mario's solid-as-always platforming play mixed with the planet-hopping twist, great visuals, and terrific sound put it over the top. We rewarded the also-amazing Metroid Prime 3: Corruption with a 10-point review in Volume 220, and your votes gave Samus Aran's adventure a firm second-place finish.

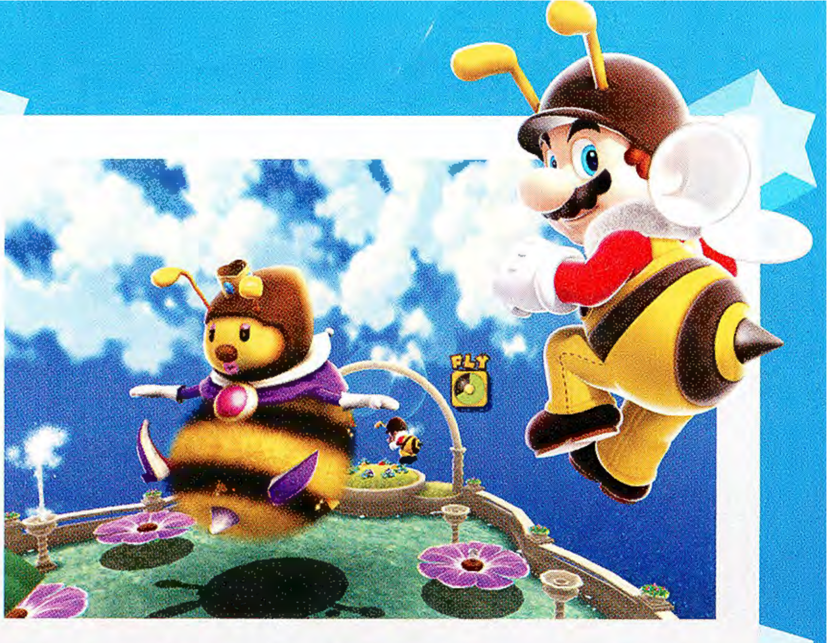


DS Game of the Year:
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

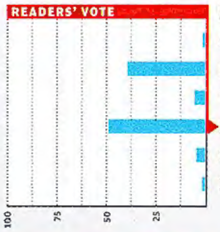
More than half of you sided with Link's latest adventure, and for good reason: it could be the best example yet of an established series playing to the strengths of its new platform. The Pokémon titles, Diamond and Pearl, finished second in the readers' poll for their DS-born innovations. An NP staff contingent rallied hard for Contra 4, but Zelda prevailed in the 11th hour.



Best Wii Graphics: Super Mario Galaxy

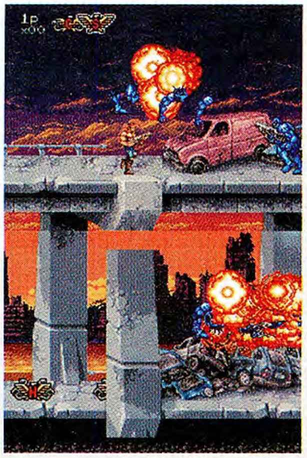


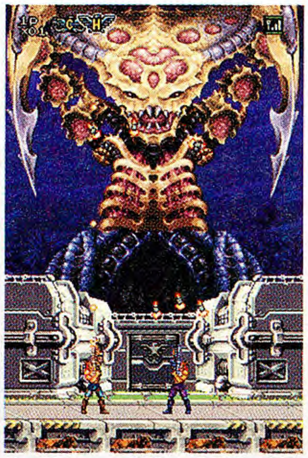
The wild worlds of Super Mario Galaxy were packed with amazing visuals from beginning to end. Lava pits looked so viscous you could almost feel the heat, refracting crystals stunned with their beauty, and fur-textured bees were practically ticklish to the touch. Galaxy shows what the Wii is truly capable of.



THE NOMINEES

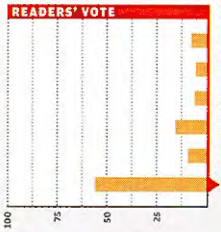
- Guilty Gear XX Accent Core
- Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
- NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams
- Super Mario Galaxy
- Super Paper Mario
- Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure





Best DS Graphics: Contra 4

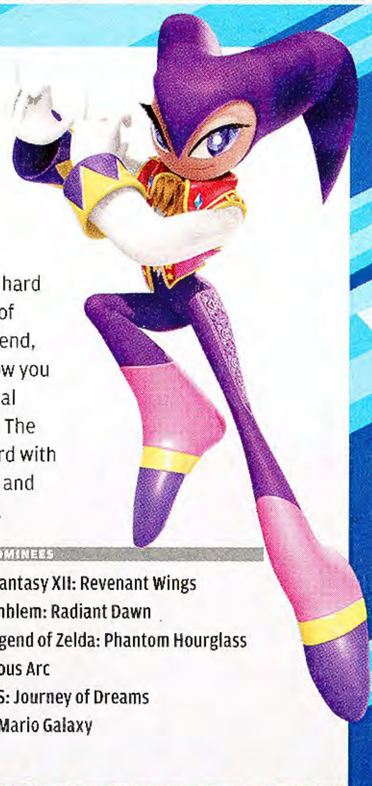
We like 3-D as much as the next guy, but we can't deny the gorgeously detailed hand-drawn splendor of Contra 4. Two screens worth of massive bosses, endless explosions, and never-ending streams of firepower made for a game that was as impressive to watch as it was to play. Readers went with Phantom Hourglass, despite the controversial Wind Waker graphic style.



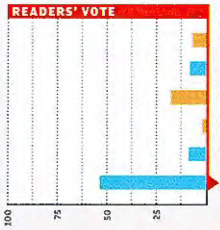
THE NOMINEES

- Brothers in Arms DS
- Contra 4
- Dementium: The Ward
- Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings
- Hotel Dusk: Room 215
- The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

Best Music: NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams

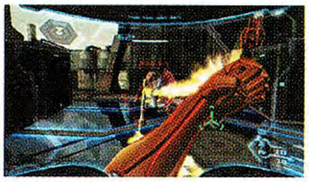


Certain staff members pushed hard for the lush orchestral sounds of Super Mario Galaxy, but in the end, we had to share the love. By now you know that we have a very special place in our hearts for NiGHTS. The Sega epic finished a distant third with readers, behind winner Galaxy and runner-up Phantom Hourglass.



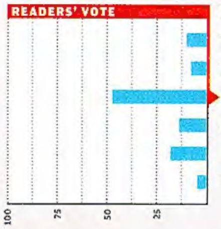
THE NOMINEES

- Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings
- Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn
- The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
- Luminous Arc
- NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams
- Super Mario Galaxy



Best Sound/Voice Acting: Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

We knew that Metroid Prime 3: Corruption was bound to win something. It's too great a game to be relegated to the second tier. What brought it to the top of the Sound/Voice category was the fact that it's the first Nintendo-published title with extensive voice acting. Particularly well-received was the work of Chris Sabat (Dragon Ball Z's Vegeta) as the voice of Rundas.

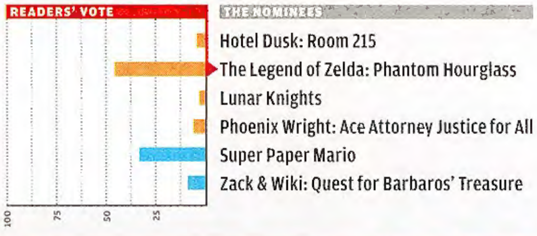


THE NOMINEES

- The Godfather: Blackhand Edition
- The Legend of Spyro: The Eternal Night
- Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
- Rayman Raving Rabbids 2
- The Simpsons Game
- Transformers: The Game

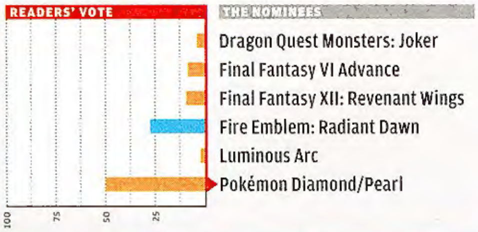
Best Adventure Game: The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

It was between Phantom Hourglass and Super Paper Mario for both contingents. Mario's adventure has the dimensional shift between 2D and 3D that provides the basis for many of its great puzzles, but Phantom Hourglass won out for its groundbreaking use of the DS's unique features. If we didn't know better, we'd say that the handheld was invented specifically for this game.



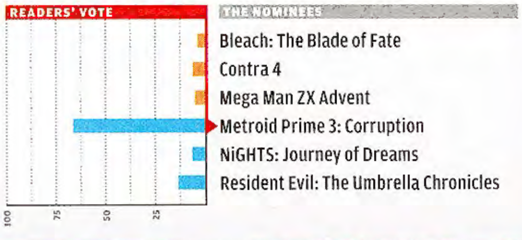
Best RPG/Strategy Game: Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn

You know that our staff loves an underdog, and Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn is a deserving one with its impressive strategic play and emotional storyline. The game did garner second-place support with readers, but a full 50% went with the revitalized Pokémon series. You can never count out the power of Pokémon.



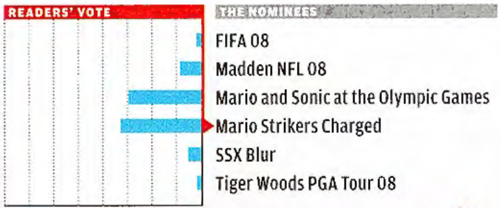
Best Shooter/Action Game: Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

From the time that the Wii's motion-and-pointing-based control was revealed, we all knew that it would be great for the first-person shooter genre. Metroid Prime 3: Corruption confirmed that notion by letting players really feel like Samus for the first time, and went above and beyond with its top-notch presentation. Kudos to Retro Studios.



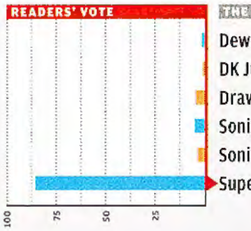
Best Sports/Racing Game: Mario Strikers Charged

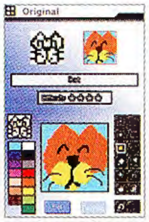
Chaos reigned in the Sports/Racing category with Mario Strikers Charged putting a slide tackle on Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games at the last moment (with 41% of readers' votes compared to the Olympic title's 37%). Of course, chaos is nothing new to the Mario Strikers series: the fast-paced titles have made some US gamers realize that soccer is actually exciting.



Best Platformer: Super Mario Galaxy

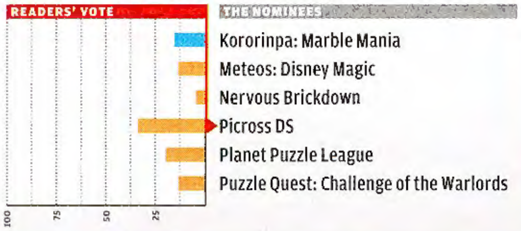
The largest margin of victory among the reader awards this year (85% of the votes compared to second-place finisher Sonic and the Secret Rings's 5%) went to the series that invented the platformer. Though we're not ready to call Galaxy the greatest platformer of all time (other Mario titles may still have the edge), it did break ground for the genre, and that is quite an amazing feat.



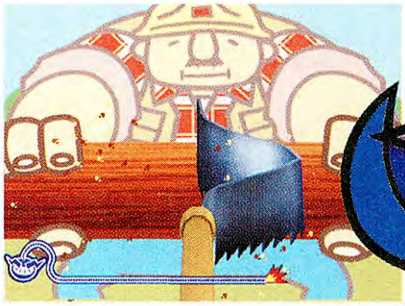


Best Puzzle Game: Picross DS

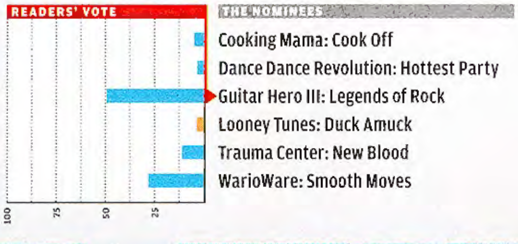
The best puzzle games are easy to pick up and hard to put down, and that was certainly the case with Picross DS. The game's concept of creating simple images on a grid using numerical clues has rarely been explored in video games, leading to a fun, fresh, engrossing experience. The ability to create your own puzzles ensures that gamers will be hooked on Picross for a long time.

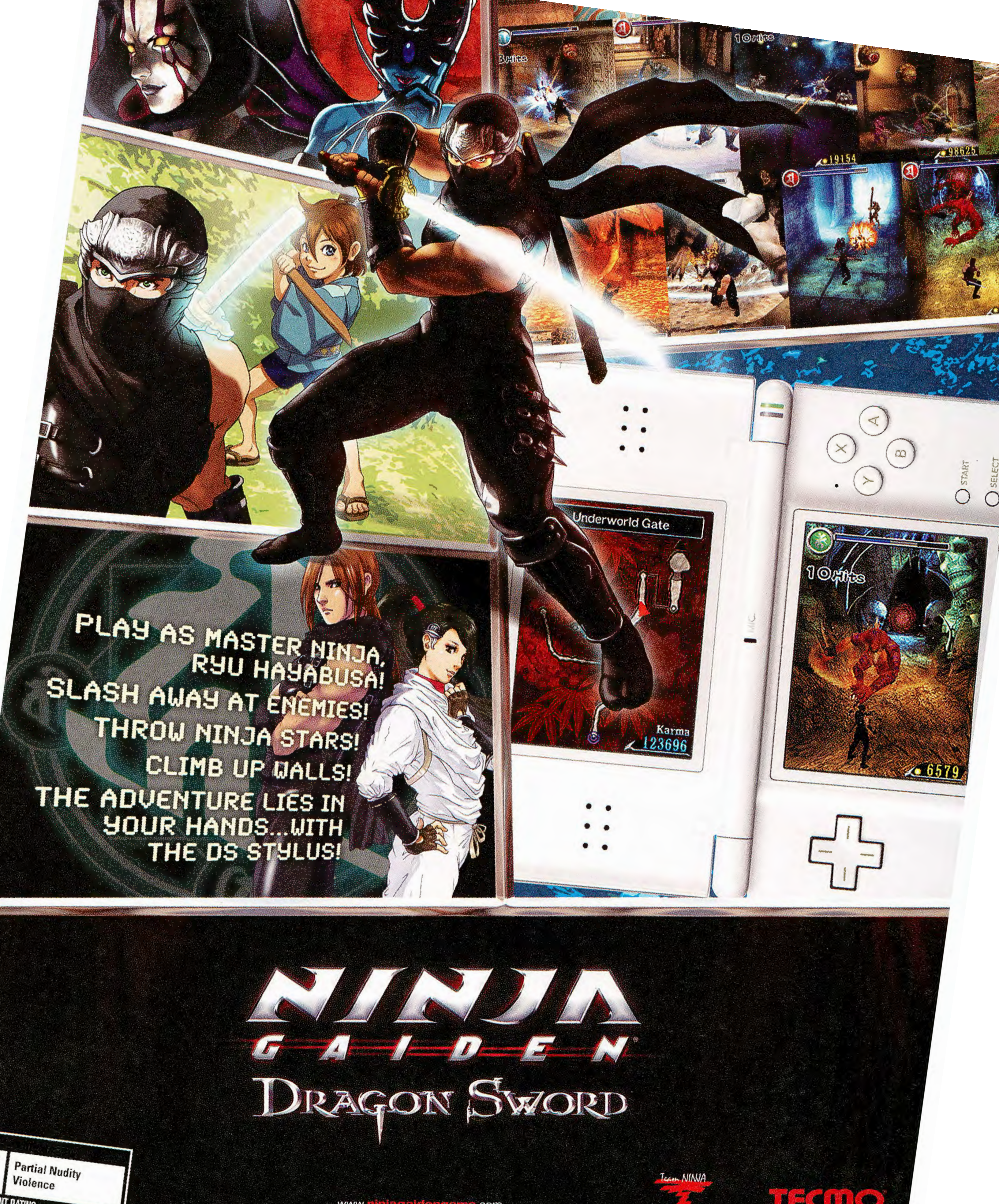


Best Alternative Game: WarioWare: Smooth Moves



Could it be that we NP staffers don't see ourselves as rock stars? No. That's not it. Perhaps it's that we're gameplay nerds and we couldn't let one last chance to honor WarioWare's motion-controlled zaniness slip by. Nintendo consoles may have been late to the Guitar Hero party, but the readers' vote shows that Wii made up for it with cordless axe grinding.




10 Hits
3 Hits
19154
98625
START
SELECT
Underworld Gate
10 Hits
Karma
123696
6579
PLAY AS MASTER NINJA, RYU HAYABUSA!
SLASH AWAY AT ENEMIES!
THROW NINJA STARS!
CLIMB UP WALLS!
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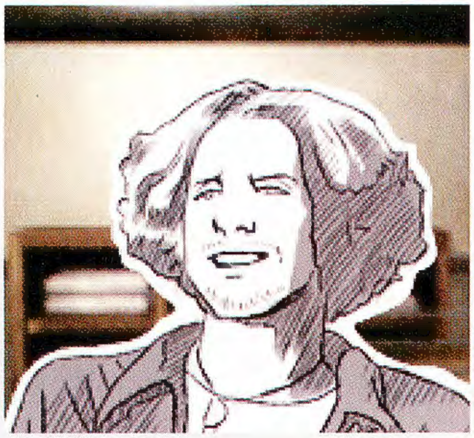
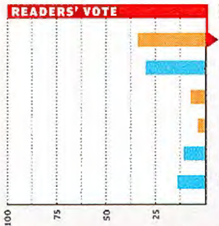


Best New Character: Louie Denonno—Hotel Dusk: Room 215

Louie Denonno isn't your typical video game character. He's kind of an idiot, a bit of a loser, and as lazy as they come. However, he's also a character that feels surprisingly real, and he proved to be an unlikely ally within the mysterious Hotel Dusk. The readers didn't care much for Louie, but their pick, Capt. Linebeck, actually shares a lot of Louie's qualities.

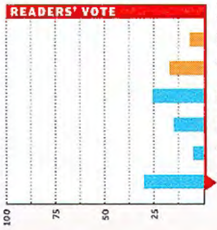


THE NOMINEES

- ▶Captain Linebeck–The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
- Count Bleck–Super Paper Mario
- Franziska von Karma–Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All
- Louie Denonno–Hotel Dusk: Room 215
- Micaiah–Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn
- Zack–Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure

Best Multiplayer: Trauma Center: New Blood

Trauma Center: New Blood is a game that was made for multiplayer. Saving a victim's life is a rush, and it's even better when you've got a partner next to you, communicating and working in beautiful harmony to suture wounds, stabilize vital signs, set fractured bones, and more. Like the readers, we loved WarioWare's multiplayer mode, but why isn't it available from the beginning?



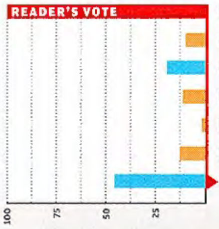
THE NOMINEES

- Contra 4
- The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
- Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games
- Rayman Raving Rabbids 2
- Trauma Center: New Blood
- ▶WarioWare: Smooth Moves

VITAL
1
VITAL WARNING
Time limit
4:12:66
score
1674
41 CHAIN
Cool
Spirit of life, guide my hands!
STITCHES
Skip
DRAIN

Best Story/Writing: Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All

It was a tough verdict, but in the end Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All took home the award for another set of well-written cases that deftly combined comedy and drama. The writers proved that law can be wildly entertaining; how can you not like a game featuring a clown who paraphrases *The A-Team* on the witness stand? Of course, you can't go wrong with the humorous Super Paper Mario either.

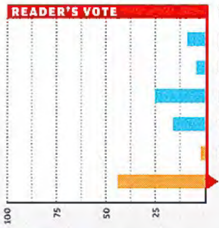


THE NOMINEES

- Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings
- Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn
- Hotel Dusk: Room 215
- Luminous Arc
- Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney: Justice for All
- ▶Super Paper Mario

Best Online Game: Pokémon Diamond/Pearl

Pokémon trading has been one of the most popular social activities among gamers for the last 10 years. The fact that you can do it online with Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl pushed those titles past contenders Mario Strikers Charged and Medal of Honor: Heroes 2. It's great to make a connection with other gamers, but one thing's for sure: no one's going to get our favorite Squirtle!



THE NOMINEES

- Battalion Wars 2
- Madden NFL 08
- Mario Strikers Charged
- Medal of Honor: Heroes 2
- Planet Puzzle League
- ▶Pokémon Diamond/Pearl

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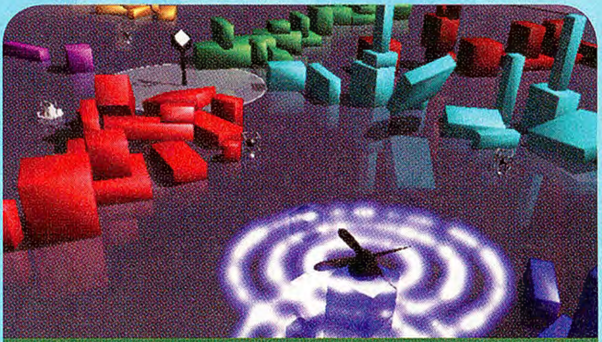

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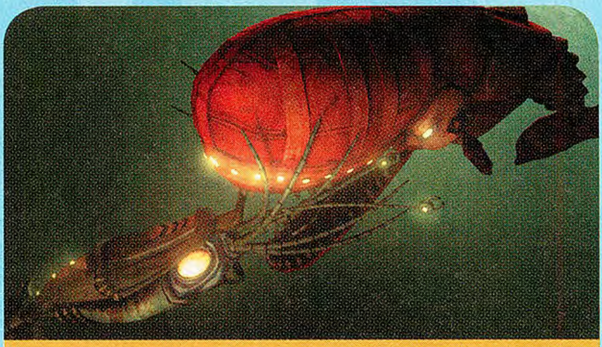

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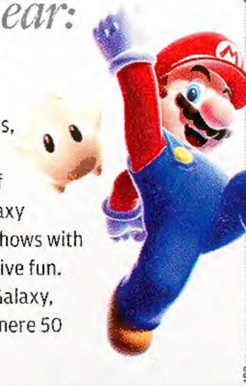
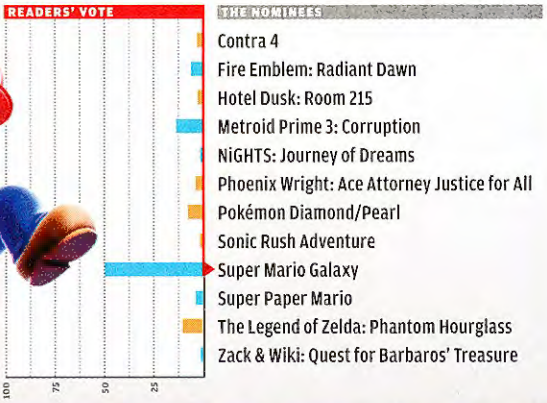
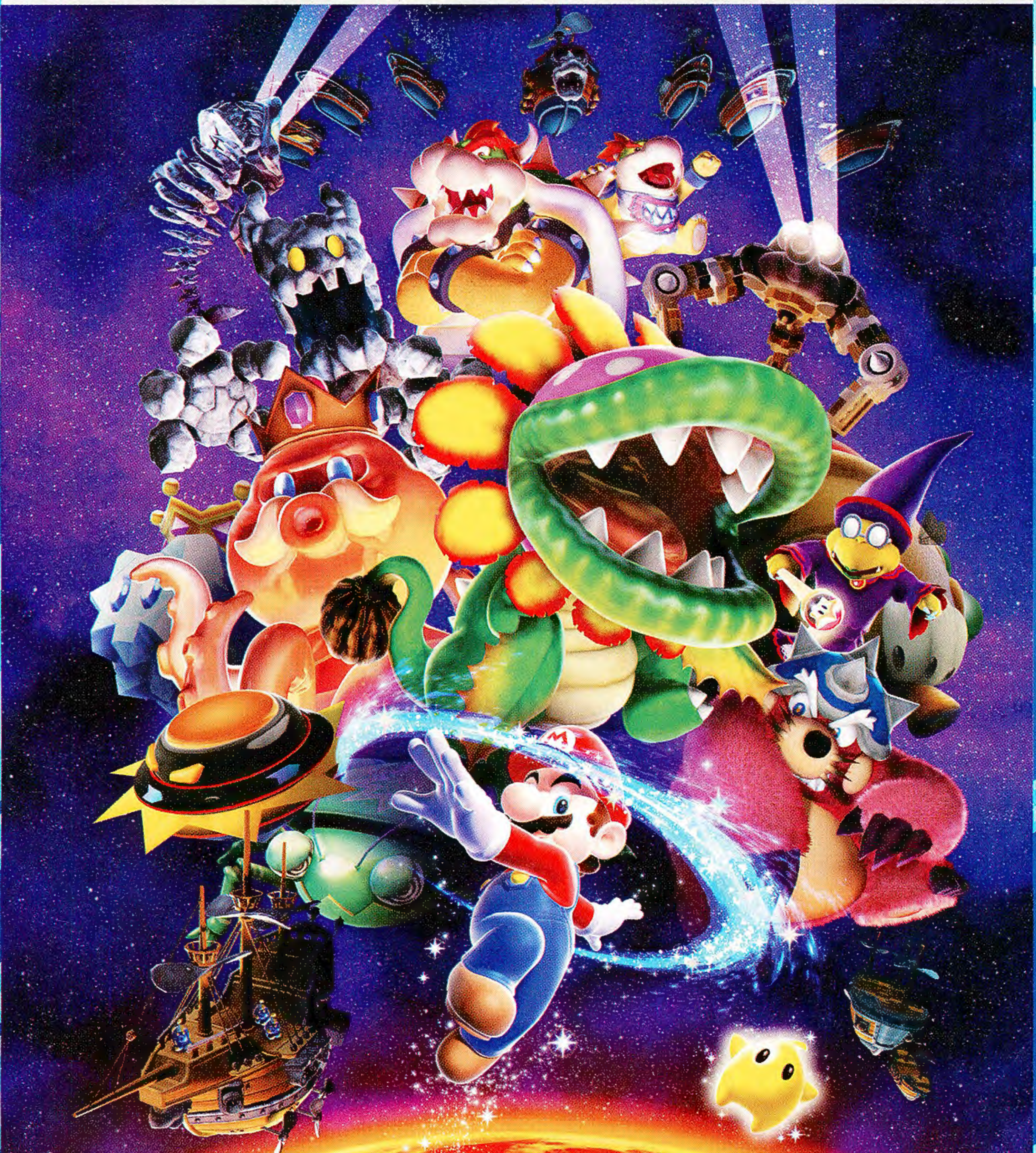
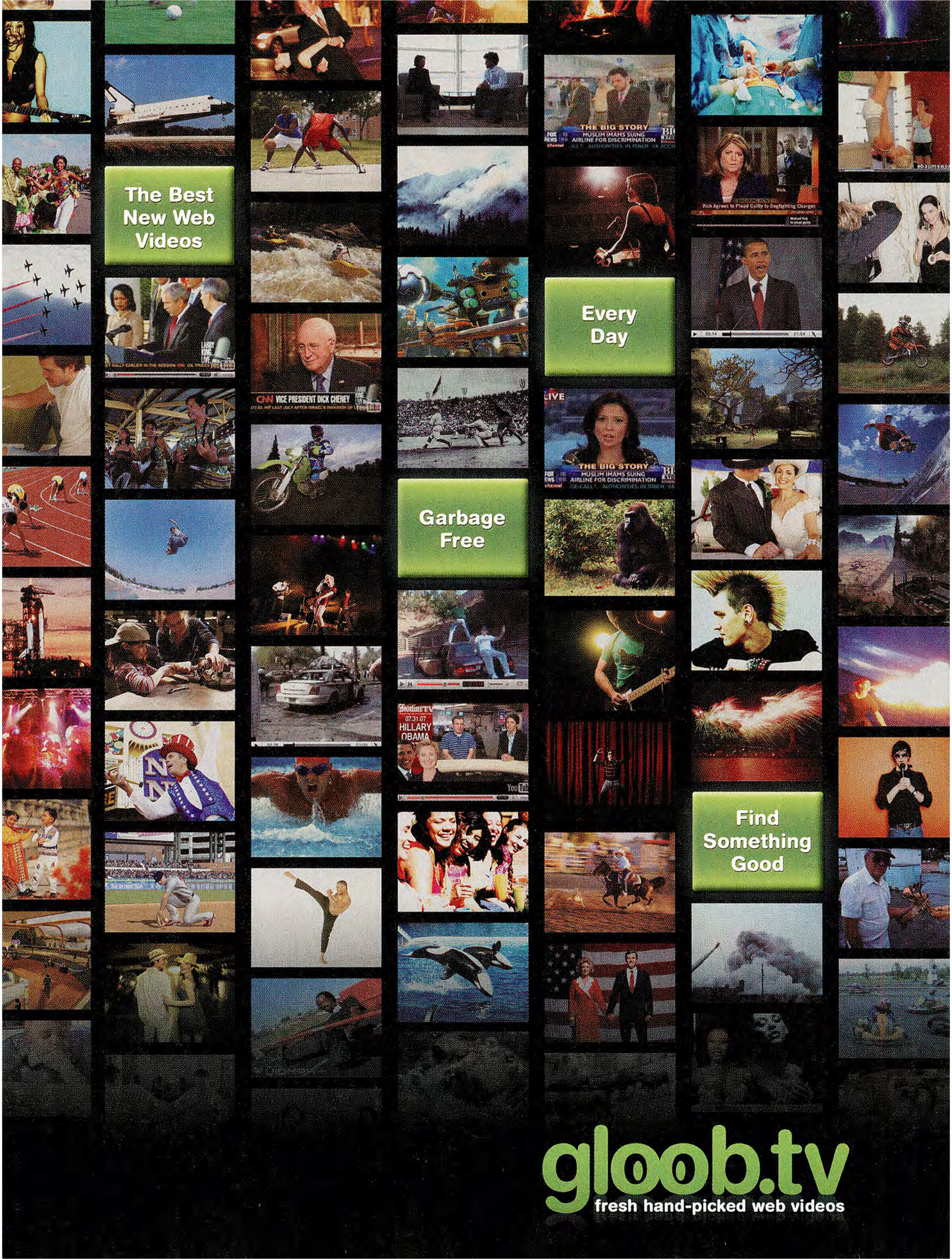
Overall Game of the Year:
Super Mario Galaxy

Was there any doubt? Super Mario Galaxy has it all—an awesome zero-gravity hook, fabulous looks, an excellent soundtrack, fantastic use of Wii controls, and plenty of innovation added on top of the traditional Mario hop-and-bop goodness. Galaxy seems to be designed without limitations, and it shows with its nearly endless penchant for creative, imaginative fun. The only surprise in this category is the fact that Galaxy, the unanimous pick with the NP staff, received a mere 50 percent of the readers' votes.




READERS' VOTE
THE NOMINEES
Contra 4
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn
Hotel Dusk: Room 215
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption
NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Justice for All
Pokémon Diamond/Pearl
Sonic Rush Adventure
Super Mario Galaxy
Super Paper Mario
The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure
100
75
50
25

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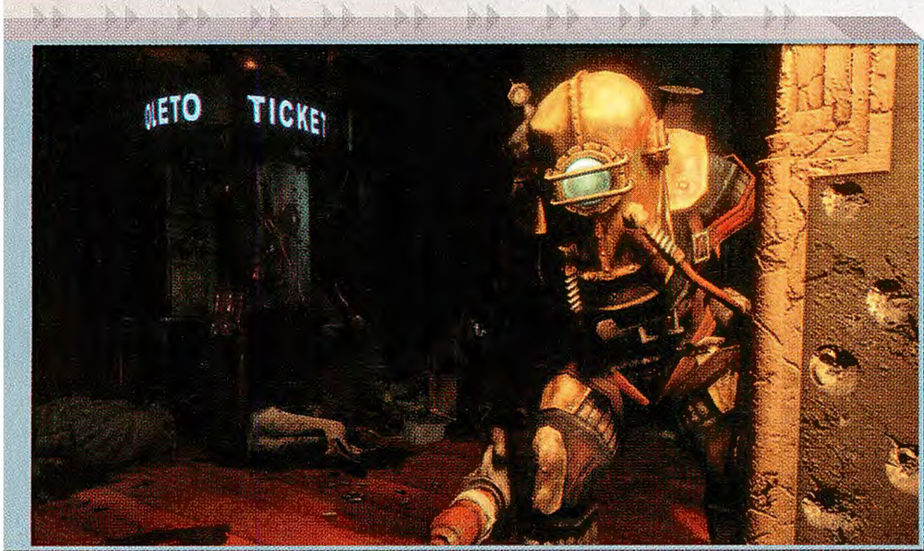
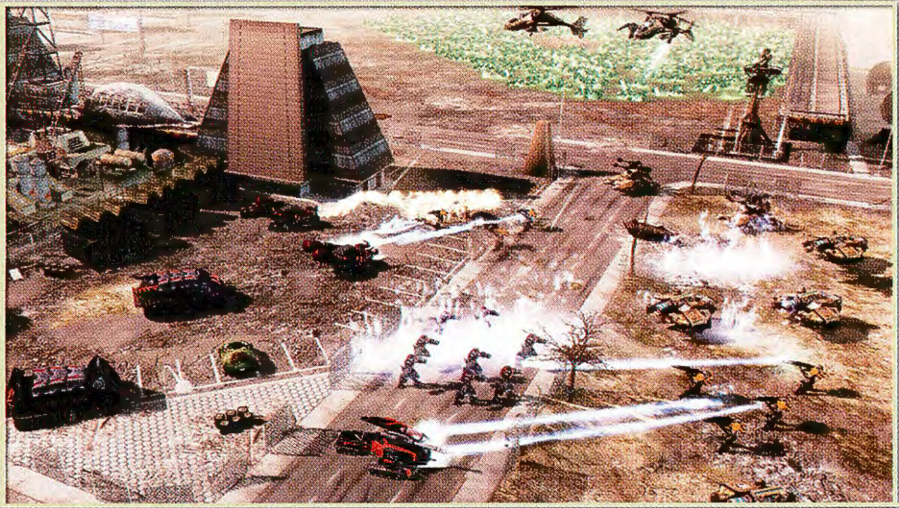


DEMOS

MODS



PATCHES

EXPAND.GAMIN

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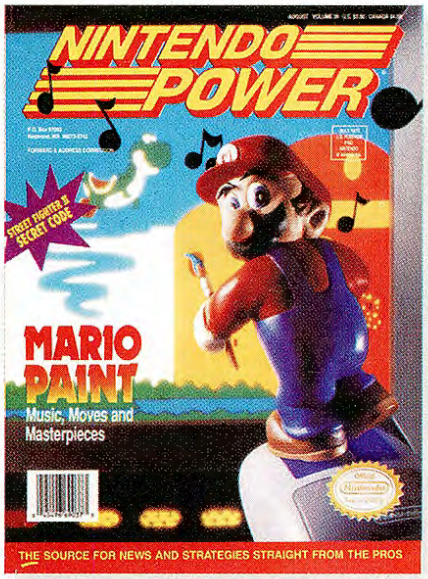
G. KNOWLEDGE.

THE COVER STORY

Publishing wonks will tell you that a magazine cover's job is to sell newsstand copies using daring imagery and bold copy to excite potential buyers. That may sound pretty straightforward, but picking cover topics and designing a compelling cover treatment is anything but a simple process. At Nintendo Power there are no rules guiding the staff's choice. The decision begins by weighing the issue's content. What are the biggest stories? Is a story exclusive to NP? Is a game just too big to ignore? Is it too early or too late to place it on the cover? Is a viable image available? After considering all these factors, debating them, and engaging in armed combat with those who disagree, a winner emerges and the development (and healing) process begins. It's a huge deal at many game publishers to win a cover. Back in the '90s one publisher was so hot for a Nintendo Power cover that the company president instructed his public relations staff to bring him a cover...or else! Surprisingly, nobody ever bribed us with Ferraris or vacations to Tahiti (the fools) and fortunately for that previously-mentioned PR staff they eventually landed a cover and they're all still alive. On that happy note, let's dig into the best and worst of what we have presented to the world as the face of Nintendo Power. **BY SCOTT PELLAND**


NINTENDO POWER
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MARIO PAINT
Music, Moves and Masterpieces
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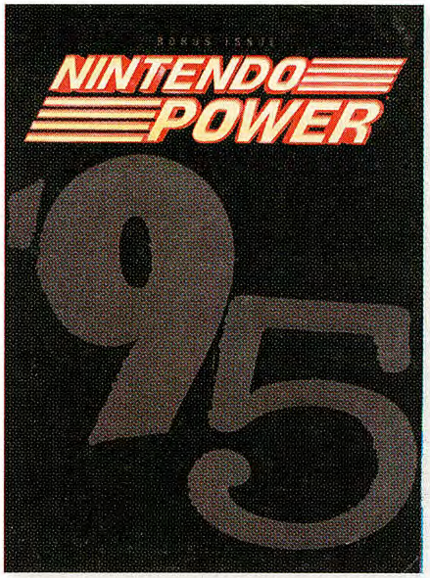
Missed Bets

VOL. 39 • AUGUST 1992

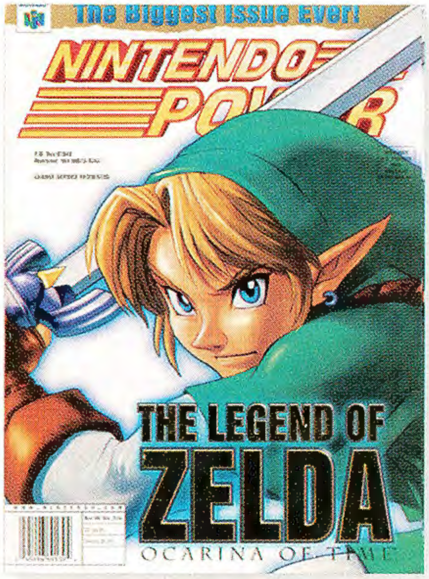
Some games lent themselves to particular images or treatments, yet somehow we missed the obvious connection. For instance, Vol. 39 featured Mario Paint, but instead of asking an artist to create a beautiful image using Mario Paint itself, we dropped the ball and returned to a clay model presentation first seen on Vol. 1's cover. We also missed the boat occasionally when it came to picking the best game. For Vol. 138, November 2000, we could have chosen any one of a host of interesting titles, including Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine, Harvest Moon 2, Star Wars: Episode I—Battle for Naboo, or The Amazing Spider-Man, but we gave you Hey You, Pikachu! Having no memory of the actual circumstances surrounding this decision, I can only surmise that we were momentarily blinded by cuteness. I humbly apologize.



Hidden Treats

VOL. 68 • JANUARY 1995

Not every cover is exactly what it seems. The black cover that greeted readers at the outset of 1995 used special glow-in-the-dark ink. If you held it up to the light for a minute or so, then took it into a dark room, the thing glowed! It seemed cool at the time. But that issue also introduced an updated 3-D-rendered logo on a second, inside cover, which featured The Adventures of Batman & Robin. That issue also ushered in one of the few redesigns NP has seen over the years—what we called the "Play It Loud" design, which borrowed from Nintendo's grunge music-inspired marketing theme of the day. (More on that in another issue.)



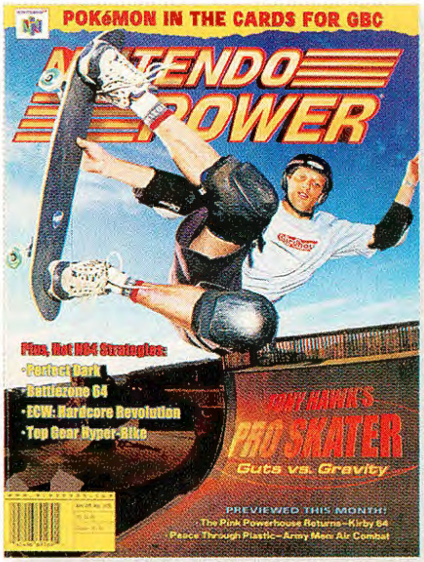
The Gold Standard

VOL. 114 • NOVEMBER 1998

The arrival of any new Legend of Zelda game has always been a seminal event for Nintendo fans, and the NP staff has tried to elevate its coverage of those games with special cover treatments. When we introduced the redesigned NP with Vol. 193, The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess was the subject. Volume 50 featuring Link's Awakening and a gold background was another classy take, but Vol. 114's extreme Link close-up and use of shiny gold foil with a high-gloss paper made it one of the best and most expensive NP covers ever.

OF NINTENDO POWER

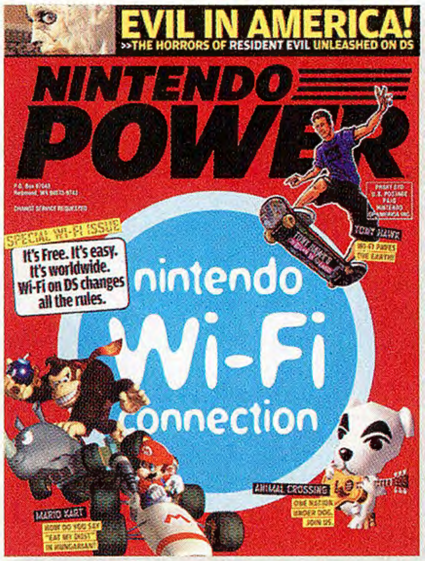
#3 IN OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NINTENDO POWER'S CLASSIC MOMENTS


POKéMON IN THE CARDS FOR GBC
NINTENDO POWER
Plus, Hot N64 Strategies:
·Perfect Dark
·Battlezone 64
·ECW: Hardcore Revolution
·Top Gear Hyper-Bike
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER
Guts vs. Gravity
PREVIEWED THIS MONTH!
The Pink Powerhouse Returns—Kirby 64
Peace Through Plastic—Army Men: Air Combat

Face Books

VOL. 131 • APRIL 2000

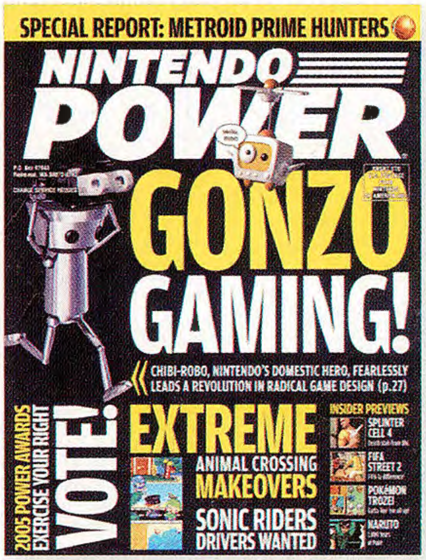
What do Tony Hawk, Jack Nicholson, Ken Griffey Jr., Hulk Hogan, Michael Keaton, Brett Favre, Kobe Bryant and Pierce Brosnan have in common? They have all appeared photographically (as themselves or movie characters) on the cover of Nintendo Power. The vast majority of NP covers have featured either illustrated or rendered art, but we tapped into the star power of these and other celebs when it was the right fit with the featured game.


EVIL IN AMERICA!
>>THE HORRORS OF RESIDENT EVIL UNLEASHED ON DS
NINTENDO POWER
SPECIAL WI-FI ISSUE
It's Free. It's easy. It's worldwide. Wi-Fi on DS changes all the rules.
nintendo Wi-Fi Connection
TONY HAWK
MARIO KART
ANIMAL CROSSING

Cover by Committee

VOL. 199 • JANUARY 2006

Quite possibly our worst cover ever featured the ham-fisted use of the Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection logo and a combination of iconic art from three DS games that was supposed to whet reader appetites for online gaming, but it really just proved that designing a magazine cover by committee is a remarkably poor idea. The only good thing to emerge from this debacle was the wicked pun that appeared in the top bar: "Evil In America" referred to the announcement that Resident Evil for DS was headed our way. In hindsight, that zombie would have made a much livelier cover.


SPECIAL REPORT: METROID PRIME HUNTERS
NINTENDO POWER
GONZO GAMING!
CHIBI-ROBO, NINTENDO'S DOMESTIC HERO, FEARLESSLY LEADS A REVOLUTION IN RADICAL GAME DESIGN (p.27)
2005 POWER AWARDS
EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT
VOTE!
EXTREME
ANIMAL CROSSING
MAKEOVERS
SONIC RIDERS
DRIVERS WANTED
INSIDER PREVIEWS
SPLINTER CELL 4
FIFA STREET 2
POKéMON TROZEI
NARUTO

Copy This

VOL. 201 • MARCH 2006

Pictures may be worth a thousand words, but copy plays a vital, supporting role in a cover's sales success. Given the limited space available for imagery on the cover, words are often the only way to convey an issue's depth and breadth. A snappy or provocative phrase can sum up a story and inspire a newsstand browser to plunk down his hard-earned cash. Major game titles in bold print may be enough to close the sale, but what if you don't have a Mario, Sonic, or Zelda game or awesome art to display? Two years ago this month, a cover crisis was brewing at the NP office: Chibi-Robo was the highlight of our biggest feature story, but the game was unknown, and to make matters worse we had limited art to use for the cover design. The solution proposed by the art staff was to reverse the normal balance of power and emphasize text over imagery. It was a great gimmick, but you can't use a trick like that every month.

JUDGED BY ITS COVER

Never shy about voicing their opinions on virtually any topic, the NP staff bravely wades into the debate over what is the best NP cover of all time. We'd love to hear your views, too.

SCOTT PELLAND

My favorite cover is actually a series of four collectible Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire covers from Vol. 92, January 1997. If you put them all together side-by-side, they created a complete Star Wars scene. I have only two of them in my private collection, so I'm hoping the Storm Trooper and IG-88 covers show up on eBay.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

I'd say the best cover is the Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess cover from issue 211. It's just simply beautiful artwork from a fantastic game (although I wish the image wasn't quite so obscured). On a more personal note, I've always liked the cover of Vol. 32, featuring Super Castlevania IV. A painted Simon Belmont, illuminated by an unearthly glow, was subtle yet striking.

STEVE THOMASON

I'm gonna go with our recent NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams cover. As a huge fan of the original NiGHTS, I was so excited to reveal the long-awaited sequel to the world. Unfortunately, some European mag broke the embargo and sort of ruined the surprise, but it's a beautiful cover nonetheless.

AND THE WINNER IS...?

Win The Nintendo Power Awards Games Of The Year!

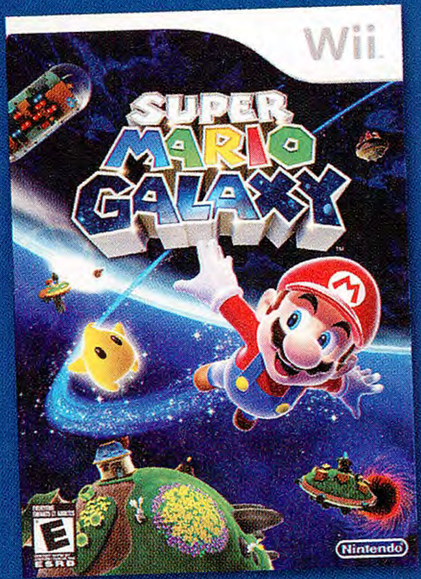
NINTENDO POWER
SWEEPSTAKES
March 2008

GRAND PRIZE:

5 WINNERS!!!!!

Super Mario Galaxy and The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass have been recognized for excellence by the Nintendo Power staff and its discerning readers. Our five winners will experience the very best that Wii and Nintendo DS have to offer.

NINTENDO DS
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
Phantom Hourglass
Nintendo



SECOND PRIZE:

10 WINNERS!!!!!!!!!!

If you had to choose one 2007 game to take with you to a deserted Pacific atoll—assuming the island had some sort of solar power station generating electricity for your Wii—nothing would fill the long hours like Super Mario Galaxy. In fact, you may never want to be rescued.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v226
c/o Future US
4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400
South San Francisco, CA 94080

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than April 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about April 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 4000 Shoreline Court, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for five (5) contestants is one retail copy of the Super Mario® Galaxy Wii software (of which the MSRP is $49.99) and one retail copy of The Legend of Zelda®: Phantom Hourglass™ Nintendo DS software (of which the MSRP is $34.99) . The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is one retail copy of the Super Mario® Galaxy™ Wii software (of which the MSRP is $49.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

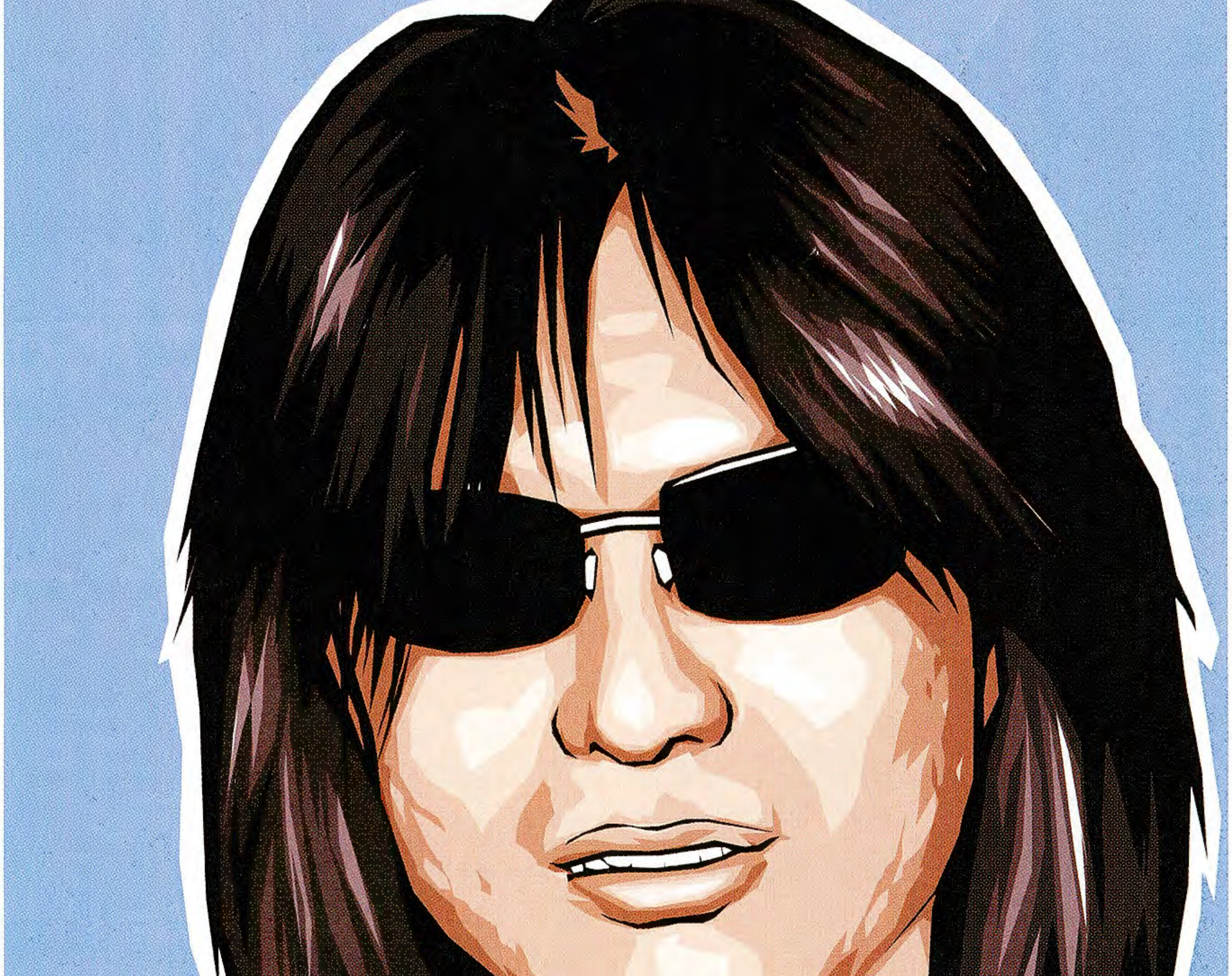
7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

9. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Void in Vermont, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.

10. Employees, officers, and directors of Future US, the publisher or their subsidiaries and affiliated companies, and their immediate families and those living in their households, are not eligible.

11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3 x 5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes v226, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Only one entry per person will be accepted.



11

Power Profiles

Tomonobu Itagaki

ILLUSTRATION BY BENJAMIN WACHENJE

He may be one of the game industry's most outspoken personalities, but Tomonobu Itagaki has the résumé to back it up. As the head of Tecmo's Team Ninja, Itagaki is responsible for the best-selling Dead or Alive franchise, and his modern reinvention of Ninja Gaiden has become a preeminent force in the action genre. And, of course, he always makes for an interesting interview.

NINTENDO POWER: Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?

TOMONOBU ITAGAKI: I studied programming when 8-bit PCs became available. When I was in middle school, I had plenty of free time, so I spent a lot of it playing around with programming. But after a year or so, I got bored with it. As I was getting ready to graduate from college, I figured that I needed to find a job. I realized that there was only one thing that I wanted to, and that happened to be making games. That's why I entered this career.

Why did you choose to go to Tecmo?

I went to Tecmo because it was the closest gaming company to my house. The particular company didn't really matter to me.

Prior to middle school, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I vaguely thought I wanted to become some sort of technician or engineer, because my father was in that field.

How has the video game industry changed since you've been involved with it?

The biggest change is the way consumers view games. Before it was a very niche activity that was popular only among game maniacs, but now it's much broader. In the past, whoever was interested in games were considered freaks. But the world has changed.

One of the first games you worked on was Tecmo Super Bowl for the Super NES. Are you a football fan?

I became a fan after I joined the project. I loved [Buffalo Bills quarterback] Jim Kelly.

What did you work on between Tecmo Super Bowl and the first Dead or Alive?

Soon after Tecmo Super Bowl, I worked on an arcade game called Football Fighter. But the sales projections didn't reach expectations, so the project was canceled.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy most?

The interactivity. To me, the most fun is pressing the button and watching the image move when it all comes together.

Where did the Team Ninja name originate?

First of all, it's something that's easy for everyone to remember. It's also easy to pronounce by everyone. And it sounds somewhat mysterious.

With Ninja Gaiden, you took a beloved franchise and reinvented it for modern times. What's the key to successfully updating a series like that?

Before talking about Ninja Gaiden specifically, you have to look at what makes a good game. What I'm concerned about is making a fun action game. I'm not really [fixated] on what the old Ninja Gaiden was. That doesn't matter so much to me. So while I was working on the new Ninja Gaiden, I received a lot of hate mail from fans of the original. They were concerned that I would destroy Ninja Gaiden. But now I think all has been forgiven.

> "In the past, whoever was interested in games were considered freaks. But the world has changed."

Are there any other classic franchises that you think would be fun to bring back?

I'd rather play something like that from someone else. [Laughs]

What made you a fan of fighting games?

Character animation. The ultimate expression of that is in fighting games.

What was the first fighting game that you played that really piqued your interest in the genre?

Virtua Fighter.

What inspired you to include a primarily female cast in Dead or Alive?

If you're playing soccer, just because everyone's on one side of the field,

DATE OF BIRTH:
April 1, 1967

BIRTHPLACE:
Tokyo, Japan

POSITION:
Head of Team Ninja

BEST KNOWN FOR:
Producing Ninja Gaiden and Dead or Alive titles; telling it like he sees it.

FAVORITE FOOD:
Beverages

CURRENT PROJECTS:
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword (DS); Ninja Gaiden 2 (Xbox 360)

GAMEOGRAPHY

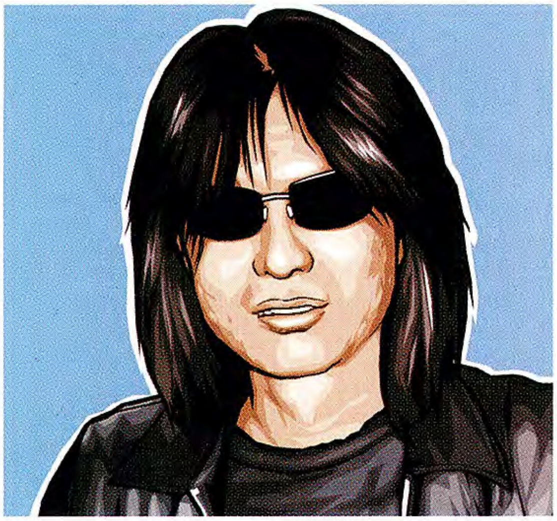
Prior to the formation of Team Ninja, Itagaki worked as a graphics programmer on a handful of Super Nintendo games, including Tecmo Super Bowl. His first task on that title was to create the snow effects.

CAPTAIN TSUBASA
1992, SUPER FAMICOM
GRAPHICS PROGRAMMER

GK
ブロック
＋
キャッチ

TECMO SUPER BOWL
1993, SUPER NES
GRAPHICS PROGRAMMER

DEAD OR ALIVE
1997, SEGA SATURN
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER



does that mean you should be there too? I chose to be on the other side. I make decisions based on mathematical calculations. That's why I'm a good gambler.

Why do you think the genre is less popular than it once was?
Maybe because there are too many bad fighting games out there now.

What would you say are the ingredients for a good fighting game?
Mathematics. And an eye for beautiful visuals.

In your opinion, what defines "cool" in a video game?
I think it's something that challenges gamers. Something that players can be proud of beating. Speaking more generally, my philosophy for what is cool is to do what you say.

You're known for giving frank and honest opinions when it comes to your competitors' games. Why do you think other developers are so hesitant to discuss the competition?
Maybe it's because they're weak. Like I said, what I think is cool, and what I strive for, is to do what I say. So if I don't say it, if I just do it, then that's not cool [Laughs]. That's why I'm sure to say it first. But of course, I don't fight for the sake of fighting. I don't engage myself in meaningless fights. But at the gambling table, people who can't talk tend to lose.

I think another reason people can't speak frankly about other people's games is that usually the spokespersons that give these interviews aren't really making their own games. I'm making my own games; that's why I can speak [about the competition].

You always seem very confident in your decisions as a game maker. Looking back, are there any decisions that you regret?
No. It's a matter of probability. It's impossible to have a 100% success rate, but if you move quickly, you'll have time to recover and recuperate from your mistakes.

> *"But of course, I don't fight for the sake of fighting. I don't engage myself in meaningless fights. But at the gambling table, people who can't talk tend to lose."*

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
There's no problem that you cannot solve. It's simply a matter of, "What is considered a solution to the problem?" Typically, those kinds of obstacles are caused by an inability to see the future. So by being able to adapt and predict the future, you can avoid creating those problems in the first place.

What types of games do you want to work on moving forward?
Action games. It's best to do what you're good at.

Last time we spoke, you mentioned that you had given some thought to making a first-person shooter. Do you still have any interest in that?
I think that the FPS genre is very saturated, so for the good of the industry, maybe I should stick with action games. I like games like Prince of Persia. That's a very well-made game. People who are capable of making games like that should continue to make action games.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
One person can't make a game, so I can't pinpoint one person. In the 1990s, I would say Sega's AM2. I respected them. Since then, I really haven't found any team that I would make special mention of.

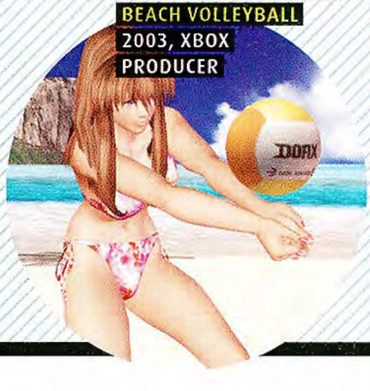
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
There are so many. One I would say is [manga artist] Leiji Matsumoto, who's best known for *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Galaxy Express*. I also really like the movie *300*.

What are some of your favorite non-gaming hobbies or pastimes?
Photography.

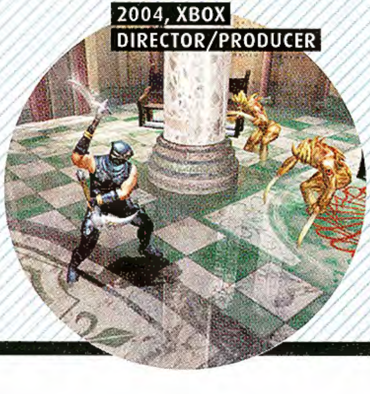
What's your favorite subject?
My daughter.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
Hmmm...time travel.

DEAD OR ALIVE 2
2000, DREAMCAST
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

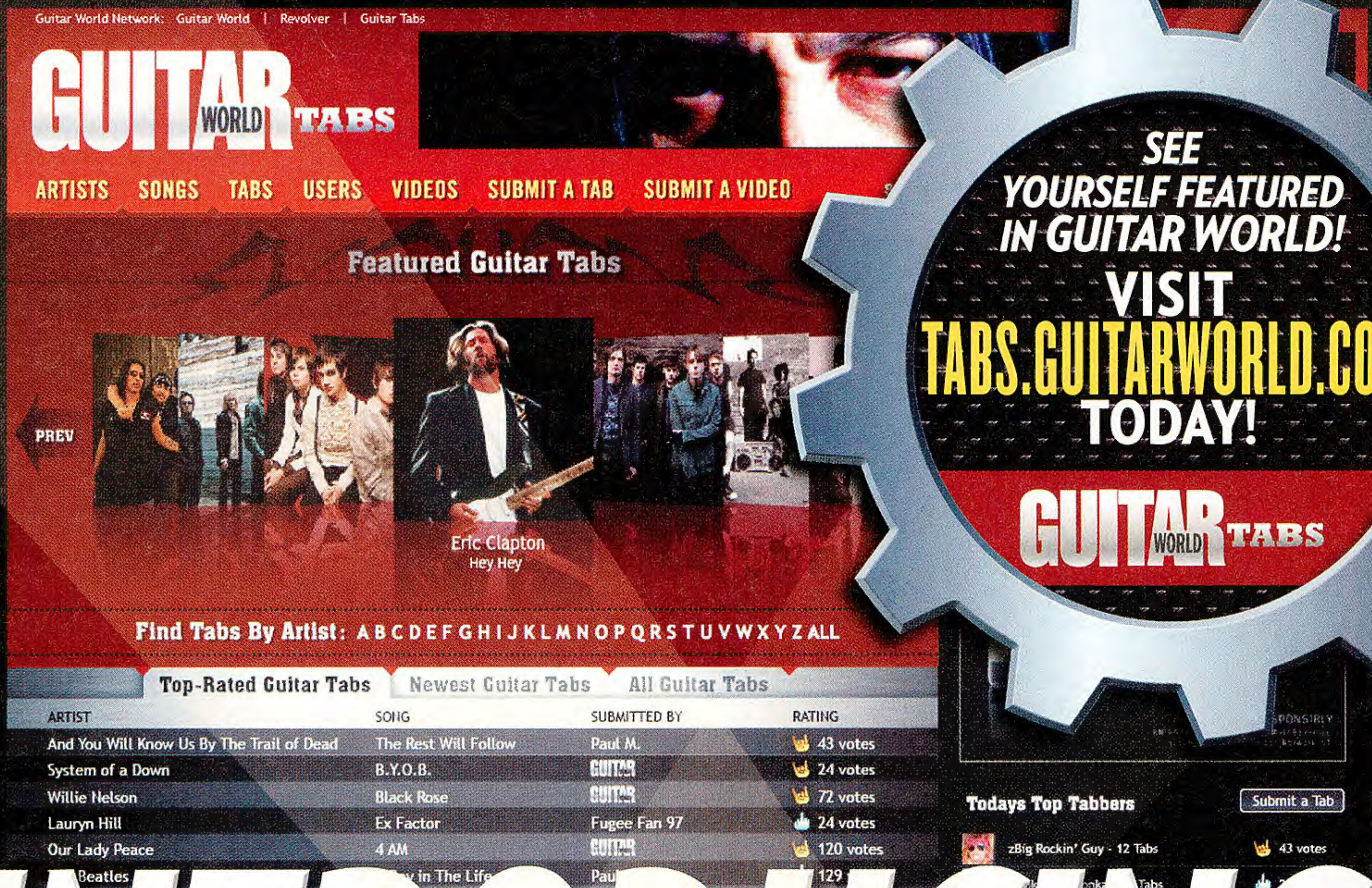


DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL
2003, XBOX
PRODUCER



NINJA GAIDEN
2004, XBOX
DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

NINJA GAIDEN: DRAGON SWORD
2008, NINTENDO DS
PRODUCER



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ARTIST	SONG	SUBMITTED BY	RATING
And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead	The Rest Will Follow	Paul M.	43 votes
System of a Down	B.Y.O.B.	GUITAR	24 votes
Willie Nelson	Black Rose	GUITAR	72 votes
Lauryn Hill	Ex Factor	Fugee Fan 97	24 votes
Our Lady Peace	4 AM	GUITAR	120 votes

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zBig Rockin' Guy - 12 Tabs — 43 votes

zBig Rockin' Guy - 15 Tabs — 1211 votes

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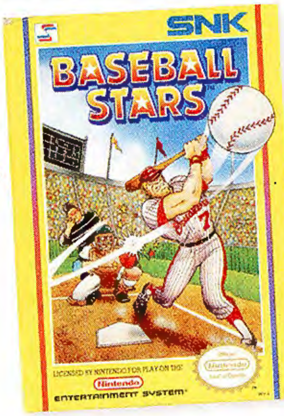
WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

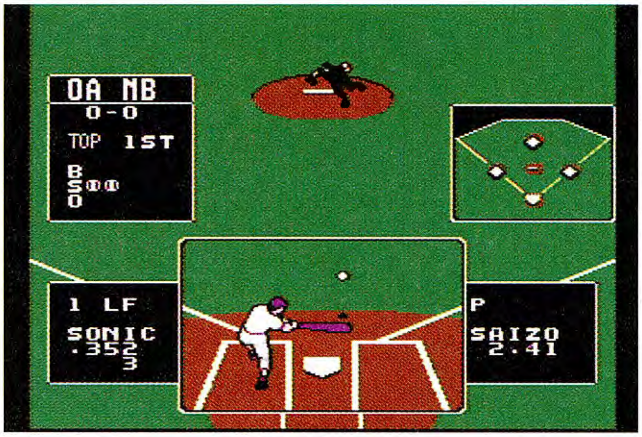
GUITAR WORLD TABS

BASEBALL STARS

SNK's classic baseball sim is a first-ballot Hall of Famer.


SNK
BASEBALL STARS
LICENSED BY NINTENDO FOR PLAY ON THE
Nintendo
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

PLATFORM: NES
DEVELOPER: SNK
PUBLISHER: SNK
RELEASE DATE: JULY 1989
COVERED IN ISSUES: 6, 10, 12, 16
MAXIMUM PLAYER SALARY: $2,980,000


OA NB
0-0
TOP 1ST
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S
O
1 LF
SONIC
.352
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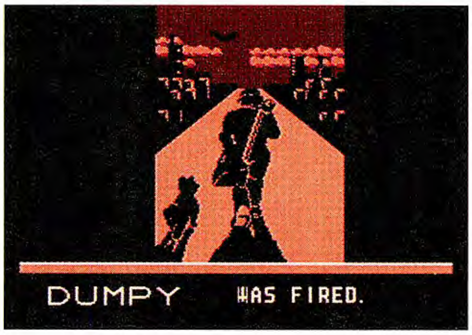
P
SAIZO
2.41

It may not be much to look at, but Baseball Stars is one of the few 8-bit sports titles that's still fun to play.

Billy Beane, eat your heart out. Back in 1989, at the tender age of 11, I was already building my own pennant-winning baseball team thanks to Baseball Stars for the NES. While competing titles provided little more than a quick dose of arcade-style action, SNK's hardball classic let you take on the role of general manager, allowing you to create and run you own franchise. You could hire free agents, make blockbuster trades, and even fire players who were underperforming (though you then had to watch the sad walking-away scene as your former employee hit the road with his trusty dog). To fill an open roster spot, you could pick up an established veteran who may be immediately ready to contribute but in the twilight of his career, or invest in the future by signing a high-upside rookie. And for each win, you'd earn money that could be used to develop your players in several categories, such as hitting, defense, or prestige (the latter of which would lure more fans to the ballpark, and subsequently bring in more cash). Over the course of a season, the game kept track of each player's individual stats, and even provided top-10 lists for the league leaders in every major category. It was a groundbreaking experience for home consoles at the time, satisfying the nerdy statistical and organizational urges of hardcore baseball nuts like no game before it.


DUMPY HAS FIRED.

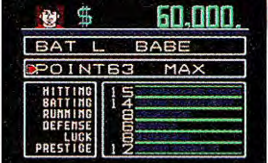
Of course, none of that would matter much if the on-field play was bush league, but there too, Baseball Stars excelled. The controls were simple and intuitive, yet every facet of the game boasted impressive depth. You had a full repertoire of pitches to choose from, and on defense you could dive for balls and even climb the fence to rob your opponent of a home run. The AI was equally impressive; off-screen fielders would automatically drift toward fly balls, and infielders would shift to prevent extra base hits when there were runners on base. Other NES baseball games seemed downright primitive by comparison.

It's the rare sports title that stands out in the history of video games, but Baseball Stars is one of the all-time best. It blazed a trail for sports sims to follow, and I'm sure I'm not the only one for whom it sparked a lifelong love of the great American pastime.
—STEVE T.

Welcome to the big leagues, kid.

TEAM THEMES

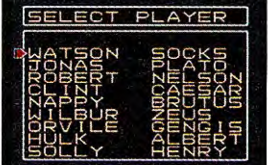
Though creating your own franchise is half the fun, Baseball Stars also includes eight default teams. The game didn't have the MLB license, so the developers decided to base each squad on a different theme.


$ 60,000.
BAT L BABE
POINT63 MAX
HITTING
BATTING
RUNNING
DEFENSE
LUCK
PRESTIGE

AMERICAN DREAMS
The American Dreams are named after MLB legends, including Babe (Ruth), Willie (Mays), and Cy (Young).

GM JR
HIT BY PITCH

GHASTLY GHOULS
The Ghastly Ghouls consist of monsters from famous horror movies. Don't crowd the plate when Cyclops is on the mound.


SELECT PLAYER
WATSON
JONAS
ROBERT
CLINT
NAPPY
WILBUR
ORVILLE
HULK
SOLLY
SOCKS
PLATO
NELSON
CAESAR
BRUTUS
ZEUS
GENGIS
ALBERT
HENRY

WORLD POWERS
At first glance, this seems to be a team made up of important historical figures. You've got Wilbur and Orville (presumably named after the Wright brothers), Caesar, Genghis, etc. But who is Hulk supposed to be? And Socks? If you have any theories, we'd love to hear 'em.

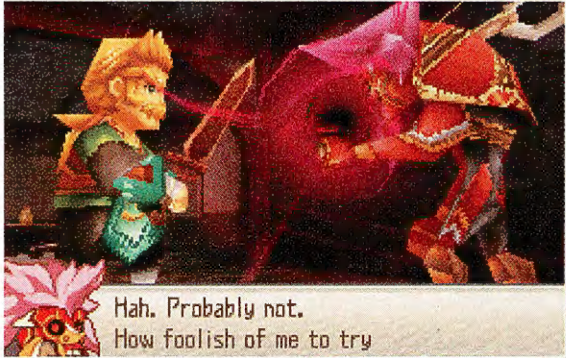
HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. **nintendopower@futureus.com**

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

Is it a mirage? A dream? Nope, Super Smash Bros. Brawl is finally here! Pg. 82.

Naruto: Ninja Destiny, Assassin's Creed: Altaïr's Chronicles, Bomberman Land, and more.



Hah. Probably not.
How foolish of me to try

777
LB$ 00000100

84
We've got the exclusive first review of Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates!

Testimony
Ema

I examined the scene and determined that only the defendant could have done it.

Evidence
Profiles

Revolver
Type: Weapons
Retrieved from Lamiroir's Dressing Room.

The murder weapon. A deadly, high-caliber revolver.

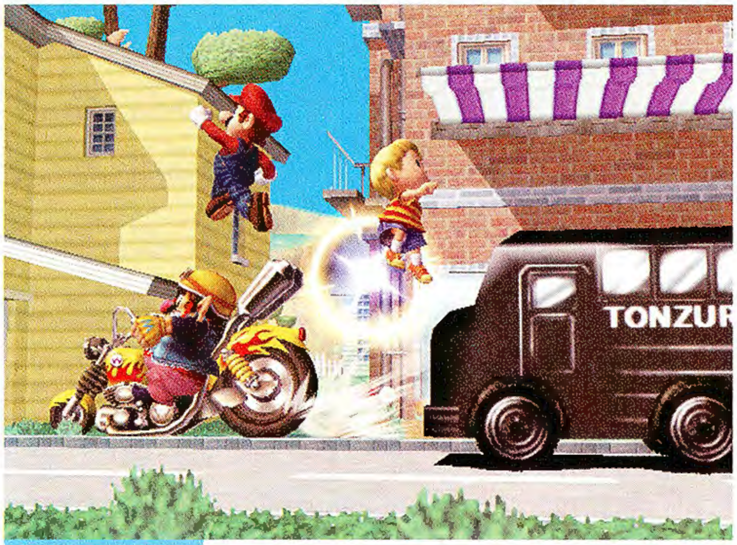
Back
Check

86
Court is back in session with Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney.

12
HP
MP 2/82
LV20
Menu

85
Read why No More Heroes is the wildest game on Wii.

88
Square Enix makes its long-awaited Wii debut with Dragon Quest Swords.



BRAWL FOR ALL

Simply Smashing

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

RATING: 10

PLATFORM: **Wii**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**

DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**

ESRB: **TEEN**

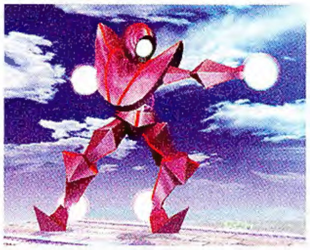
Holy cow—where do I begin? During the excruciatingly long, twice-extended wait for Super Smash Bros. Brawl, the game has been elevated into much more than a triple-A title. For an army of die-hard Smash fans, Brawl has become *the* defining moment for the Wii console. After years of anticipation, revelations, and endless speculation, can the game possibly be as good as we'd imagined and hoped? I'm ecstatic to report—in this exclusive first review of the North American version— that Brawl isn't just amazing, and it isn't just one of the best titles on Wii, but it's one of the very best games that Nintendo has ever produced.

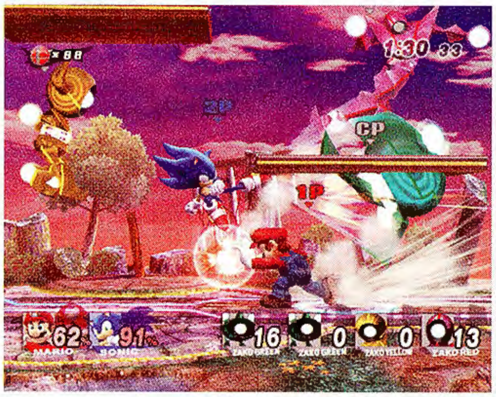
As I reflect on the many long days and late nights that I've put into Brawl so far, the main thing that comes to mind is the epic scale of the game, the staggering amount of content that series mastermind Masahiro Sakurai and his team have somehow stuffed onto a single game disc. A title this ambitious—with a talented enough team and a big enough budget to realize such sky-high goals—doesn't come to a game console very often, if ever.

Brawl has so much content, in fact, that there's simply no way to touch on every mode, feature, character, and gameplay element in these two pages—even if we devoted the entire issue to Brawl we probably couldn't recap everything. So, I'll assume that most of you are up-to-date with the daily posts at Smash Bros. Dojo, the game's official website (www.smashbros.com). On a side note, I won't reveal any features or characters that aren't on the website, so don't worry about being spoiled. Some of you will be tempted to Google every last secret, but if you can resist the urge, I highly recommend that you wait to experience the game's surprises for yourself.

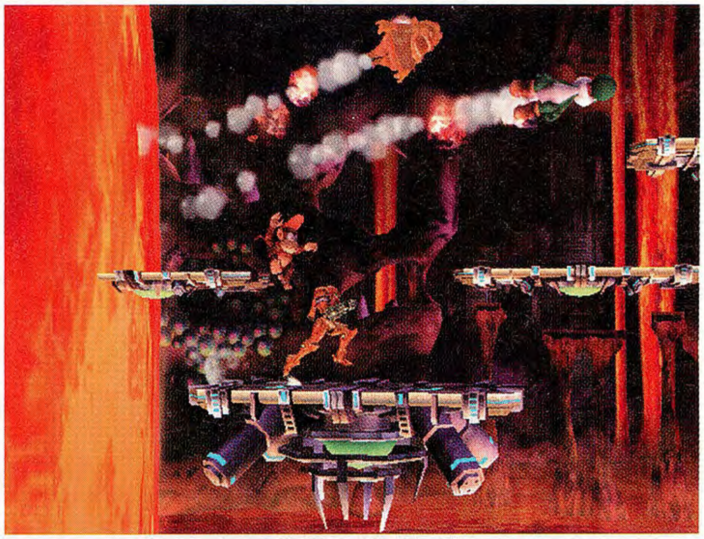
The single biggest new addition to Brawl is The Subspace Emissary, a vastly expanded adventure mode that by itself is well worth the price of admission. Just imagine if you'd never heard of the Smash series, but someone told you that Nintendo had made a side-scrolling action/adventure game starring all of its top characters—you'd flip out, right? And to think, Brawl throws it in as a bonus! I can't stress enough that this mode isn't some fluffed-out afterthought—it's packed with loads of enemies and stage types, offers incredible boss battles, supports two-player co-op, and has lots of classic Nintendo references for long-time fans to geek out over. The cinema scenes are gorgeous and contain a long list of cool and funny moments, and I'm pretty sure that Brawl has more cinemas than all other Nintendo games ever made combined. The Subspace Emissary takes longer than many top stand-alone action games to finish, and even more play value can be found in clearing each stage on harder difficulties.

The game's new fighting arenas surpass even Melee's impressive stages, but for good measure, Brawl has brought back many of those, too. While each new area adds its own unique qualities to the action, on the whole they focus on straightforward fighting without as many of Melee's quirkier, more gimmicky levels. But if it's crazy, zany brawls you want, the stage builder has you covered. I was impressed at how fast and easy it is to throw something together (it takes only about five to fifteen minutes). Even when I'd set out to make something bizarre and





Stadium events like Target Smash, Home-Run Contest, and Multi-Man Brawl [pictured] are better than ever and support co-op play.



silly, it came out surprisingly playable. With an unlimited number of potential battlegrounds, Brawl should keep players hooked even longer than Melee, which legions of fans still regularly play today, seven years after its release.

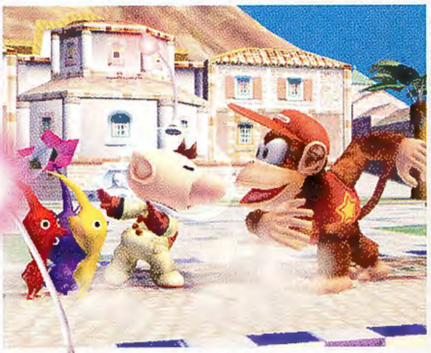
The classic Smash characters play mostly like they did in Melee, but I was pleasantly surprised by how much better they look in motion, with much more fluid animations. On the whole, characters are more unique and require a more specific approach than before. Olimar is probably the most distinct; his moves—which require strategic use of his Pikmin pals—are well-suited for master players to work into unpredictable combat strategies. Snake and Sonic, while not as unorthodox as Olimar, also introduce fresh styles to the mix and take a little longer to get the hang of. There really isn't a bad character in the bunch. It's a testament to the talent of the developers that I even enjoy playing as Diddy Kong—I've always hated that guy.

The game's control feels smoother than Melee's; you're less likely to accidentally jerk a quick character off a ledge. And, being the type of Melee player that never totally clicked with pressing up on the analog stick to jump, the game plays much better for me now that Brawl has the option to make jumps button-only. I have to admit that I didn't try very hard to warm up to the game's new controller options, and settled instead into using my comfortable Melee-worn GameCube pad. Having said that, the Classic Controller works great if you assign throws to one of its face buttons. The Wii remote and nunchuk—while cleverly implemented—are a clumsy fit for a series that was designed from the start around a more traditional controller.

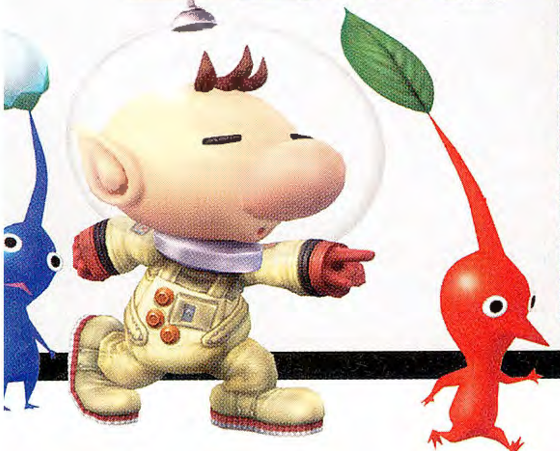
Final Smashes, Brawl's signature new feature, don't happen as often as I'd imagined (only one or two Smash Balls appear per standard match), and they often aren't the unavoidable killing sprees that many fans thought they would be. You almost always have a chance to escape a K.O., but then, clever opponents will learn to time the release of a Final Smash when opponents are at their most vulnerable. More powerful than any Final Smash, however, is the new Dragoon item. Once a player has collected this ship's three randomly appearing parts, it's almost certain death for everyone else. The timing required to dodge its flyby is so tough that the only real defense is to keep anyone from assembling the ship in the first place.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity to test the game's highly anticipated Wi-Fi Connection play, so it does not factor into this review.

Maybe, if I set my mind to it, I could scrounge up some negative things to say about the game, some details that could've used a tiny bit more polish. But against the grand scope of how much Brawl does amazingly well, any other possible concerns would be trivial at best. To deny this game a 10 purely for the sake of shying away from the top of our review scale would be a shameful disservice to one of the greatest gaming achievements in years. Rarely has any title delivered so much amazing action, such a wide variety of modes, and so many hours of value. It doesn't get any better than this. —CHRIS SL.

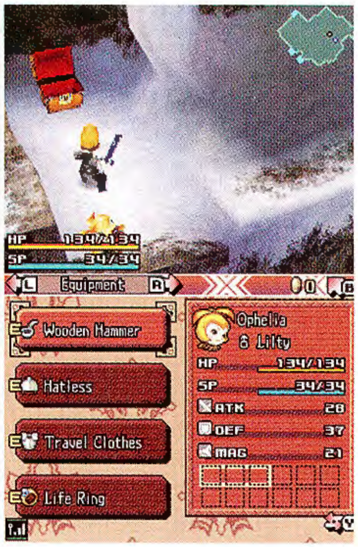


The character lineup is more diverse than ever, and newcomer Olimar is the oddest of the bunch. It'll take a pro to get the most out of his Pikmin.



HP 159/200
SP 140/185

HP 44/224
SP 75/125



FLAWED FANTASY

Through the Ringer

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: RING OF FATES

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

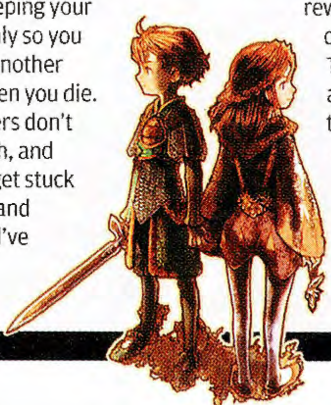
Video game insiders argue that their craft is very much an art, and with developed stories, meticulously detailed graphics, and original music compositions, it's hard to disagree. Final Fantasy games are often used as proof positive of games as art; but rather than quibbling over whether a given game is art, we should instead ponder whether it's actually any good. In the case of Ring of Fates, we're looking at an artistic mess: the story is little more than a loose string of incoherent babbling written in purple prose to make you think it's epic. The contrived voicing of the characters is creative, but it only makes the story harder to follow. On the other hand, the attention to detail evident in the design of the characters and the enemies is exceptional.

Stripping Ring of Fates down to its pure gameplay elements, there's a lot to like and a plenty to dislike. You'll spend a good part of your time in battle. Fortunately, the combat system gives you a lot of options for how to take on enemies, and all of those options have equal merit: spells are effective, as are special attacks, but if you want to just hack away with a melee weapon, that works, too. There are also a few nifty platforming puzzles to solve—the small number of them is likely a consequence of the game's overall brevity.

The party system works, but it's not great. Each character has a special ability that comes in handy for fighting particular monsters. Each one also has a special skill—a character can create platforms to cross specific gaps, while another can concoct new spell items, for example. But this group-based gameplay breaks down as you fight tougher and tougher monsters because the party AI isn't particularly strong. You basically end up fighting on your own, keeping your party alive only so you can swap to another character when you die. Party members don't attack enough, and they tend to get stuck behind walls and such. It would've been nice if their behavior were customizable to some extent.

While the mechanics of fighting and casting spells work pretty well, the unique functionality of the DS is grossly misused. Touted as a challenge by the developers, the need to switch back and forth between button and touch-screen control leads to plain frustration. Having to choose spells or perform special moves via the touch screen in the thick of battle forces you to take your focus off the action at the worst possible times. The touch screen becomes an overflow area for all the convoluted commands that couldn't be assigned to a button. Most developers learned to avoid such problems in the first two months of the DS's existence.

Adding insult to injury, the weapon and equipment system feels like a developmental dead end. You don't find weapons in the wild, but you will find recipe scrolls and components as rewards in battle to create new items. The method for actually creating the new equipment is confusing, and hardly seems worth the hassle when you can just go to the merchant next door and purchase items of comparable strength. The equipment system does offer one of the better graphical upsides to the game, though, as the characters change their appearance depending on what they're wearing.



Given Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles's excellent multiplayer focus, you'd expect great things from the Ring of Fates co-op mode. Unfortunately, those expectations are not met. The co-op stages are essentially the same as they are in single-player, except that the monsters take a lot more damage. The only benefit to playing multiplayer (other than the inclusion of your friends, of course) is that it's easier to combine spells to create more powerful ones. Outside of the co-op events, the only other thing you can do is trade Moogles, which has virtually no point. There are some minigames included, as well, but they're hardly anything to write home about.

Final Fantasy is one of the best RPG franchises in gaming history, but entries like Ring of Fates—games that are only good, not great—threaten that standing. For most game series, what we find in Ring of Fates would be acceptable; for Final Fantasy, it is a major concern.
—CHRIS SH.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT ONE THING WOULD YOU LIKE TO CHANGE IN THE 2007 NINTENDO POWER AWARDS?

Chris Hoffman

How could Final Fantasy VI Advance not win Best RPG? It's one of the best RPGs of all time, now in portable form and with extra content.

Chris Shepperd

Mario's had his time to shine long enough. Let's give Samus a little Game of the Year love for Corruption—it's the best game she's ever starred in.

George Sinfield

I would have picked Hotel Dusk: Room 215 for Best Story/Writing. The success of the game was more dependant on the writing than any of the other nominees, and the dialogue delivered big time.

Steve Thomason

There weren't many standout new characters this year, but I found Fire Emblem's Micaiah to be immensely empathetic, and thus most deserving of that award.

Scott Pelland

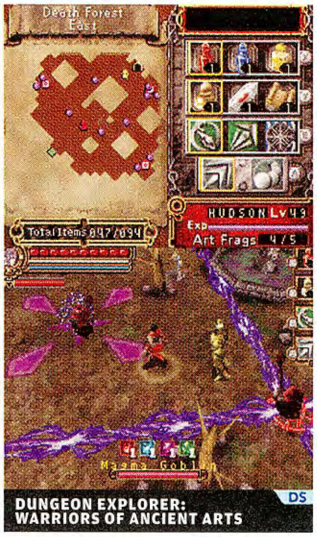
WarioWare may have pioneered a genre, but to call it an "alternative game" today is a travesty. Let's talk real alternatives, like playing guitar on your DS with Ubisoft's Jam Sessions. *That's* the ultimate expression of alternative play.

Justin Cheng

Contra 4 looks great, but I personally think that Phantom Hourglass has the best graphics on DS.

Chris Slate

Wait—we didn't give Super Mario Galaxy Best Music? That's the last time I leave Thomason and Hoffman in charge while I go on a burger run.



DUNGEON EXPLORER: WARRIORS OF ANCIENT ARTS DS

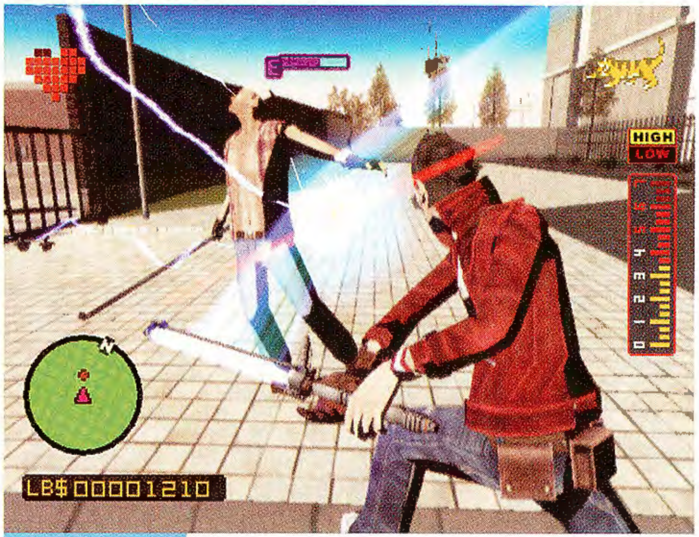
DUNGEON EXPLORER: WARRIORS OF ANCIENT ARTS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **TEEN**

A hack-and-slash adventure to the core, Hudson's Dungeon Explorer brings on the enemies in large numbers and piles on the items, armor, and weapons. You can assign two of your items to hot keys, but choose wisely; you can't suspend the action while parting out items, so the creatures have free reign to step in for cheap shots. To make matters worse, battles are made awkward by the isometric view, which favors diagonal movement and keeps you from seeing characters who are close to the nearest walls. Also, players who are used to solving puzzles and working out clues will find the game's get-a-key, open-a-door dungeon navigation to be far too simple.

Shortcomings aside, the adventure is wide in scope, giving you your pick of nine playable characters, an assortment of leveling-up options, and multiple, simultaneous quests, as well as a three-player co-op mode. The long story (doled out it in short digestible bites) and clear, detailed art style have strong appeal. While the game won't be mistaken for something on a scale with Final Fantasy, it does push old-school dungeon-crawler buttons that will trigger fond memories in veteran players. —GEORGE S.



CRAZY COOL

Wii's Wildest Game

NO MORE HEROES

RATING: 8.0

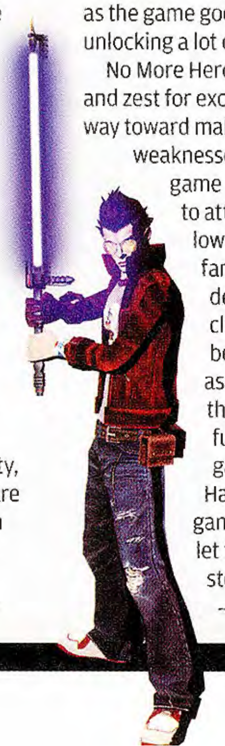
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Suda 51 is a maniac. The cult-favorite game director of GameCube's bizarre Killer 7 has outdone himself with No More Heroes, the crudest, goriest, and nuttiest game on Wii.

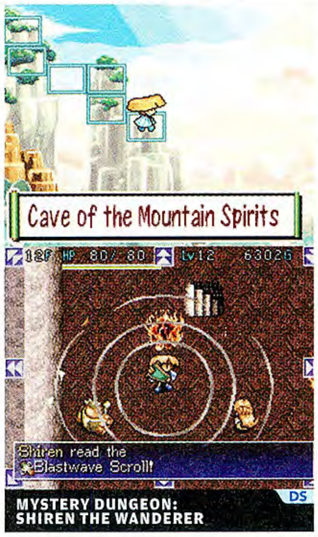
As the charismatic Travis Touchdown—an anime- and pro-wrestling-loving punk whose goal is to become the number-one assassin—you go after those ranked above you and put the business end of a Beam Katana to the legions of henchmen that stand in your way. You also explore the city on your bike, take on side jobs, and goof around in Travis's motel room. And this game is a hard "M"—foul language flows fast and furious, and bad guys explode like overstuffed blood piñatas.

There isn't much to the city, unfortunately—the streets are there simply to get you from one interior location to the next. It would've been nice to interact with pedestrians or try crazy jumps as you can in other games with similar environments. There are plenty of interesting places to check out, however, such as the video store, a weapons dealer, a clothing shop, and many more.

The battle system is easy to learn and a blast to control. The game avoids arm fatigue by using the A Button for normal Beam Katana attacks and combos, saving Wii-remote swings for over-the-top wrestling throws and gruesome death blows. There is a crisp, satisfying feel to fighting, although it does get somewhat repetitive as the game goes on, despite unlocking a lot of new moves.



No More Heroes's zany charm and zest for excess go a long way toward making up for its weaknesses. Its maverick game design is sure to attract a loyal following of die-hard fans, and its story—despite some clunky twists—will be remembered as having some of the coolest and funniest scenes in gaming history. Hardcore action gamers shouldn't let this one sit on store shelves. —CHRIS SL.



Shiren read the Blastwave Scroll!

MYSTERY DUNGEON: SHIREN THE WANDERER DS

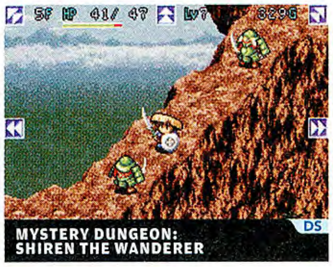
MYSTERY DUNGEON: SHIREN THE WANDERER

RATING: 6.5
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: CHUNSOFT
ESRB: EVERYONE

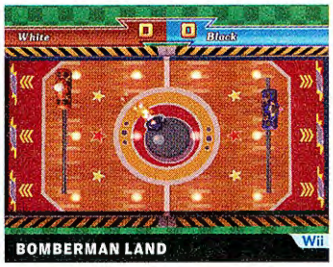
There are many ways to bite the dust in Sega's Shiren the Wanderer. Your adventurer can go hungry (with little warning), he can be overwhelmed by monsters, or he can fall victim to a hidden trap. The cost of defeat is high, too: death triggers a return to the adventure's first town, and a loss of all experience points, cash, and items (unless you have a friend who is also playing the game and can rescue you). The good news is that when you are kicked back to the starting point, it won't feel like you're fighting through the same opening dungeons ad infinitum, because the areas are randomly generated every time you visit them; the differences can be pretty huge.

The turn-based battles are as nontraditional as the rest of Mystery Dungeon. If you're lucky enough to have accumulated a few items (such as magic-generating spells), you'll be able to employ some strategy on behalf of your survival. If not, it's slash, slash, slash, and a hope to be the last one standing.

Automatic mapping is a big help in finding your way out of each section, and optional touch-screen-based movement can save time. A 50-stage testing ground in the first town is a nice addition from the original Japanese title. Starting from scratch every time you have bad luck will be frustrating, but if you can get past the setbacks, you'll enjoy a solid DS adventure. —GEORGE S.



MYSTERY DUNGEON: SHIREN THE WANDERER DS

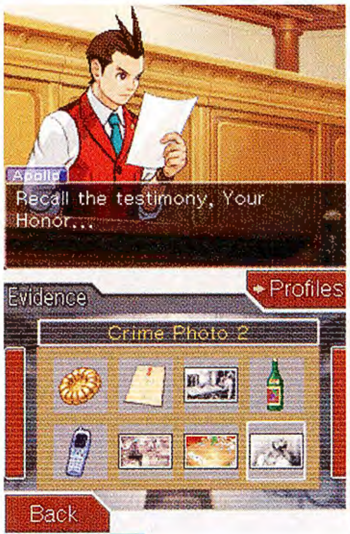


BOMBERMAN LAND Wii

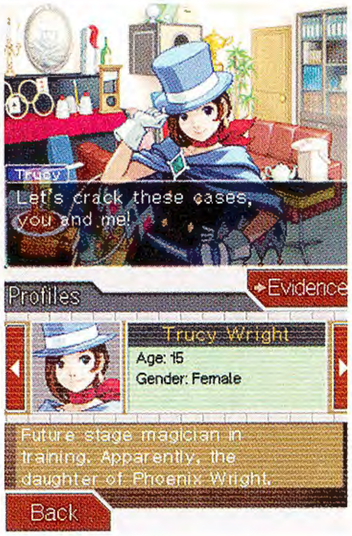
BOMBERMAN LAND

RATING: 5.0
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: HUDSON
DEVELOPER: HUDSON
ESRB: EVERYONE

Hudson's minigame-oriented Bomberman Land series has come to the Wii, but this installment is lacking something that its DS cousins had—specifically, the items, puzzles, and other adventure elements that made those games interesting. Instead, the Wii version is minigame mania through and through; there are a lot of them, and there's plenty of variety (firing arrows, racing down a waterslide, and collecting dumplings falling from the sky are among the 50 diversions), but they get pretty old, especially since if you perform poorly you'll be forced to retry entire areas or even be sent back to replay challenges you've already conquered. And would it have been that hard to include direct character control via the nunchuk instead of using a remote-only point-and-click interface? At least the traditional top-down Bomberman is included here, but if that's what you're looking for, why not play the Virtual Console version? —CHRIS H.



Recall the testimony, Your Honor...



Let's crack these cases, you and me!

Age: 15
Gender: Female

Future stage magician in training. Apparently, the daughter of Phoenix Wright.

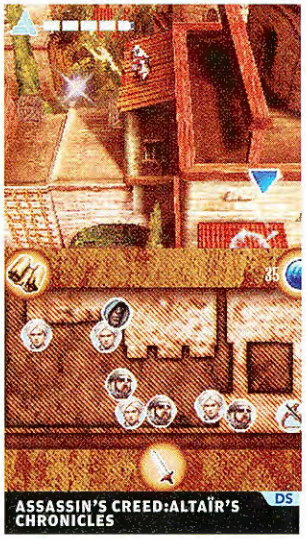
ACES WILD

Superior Court

APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY

RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
ESRB: TEEN

Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney reminds me of Metal Gear Solid 2. No, Apollo Justice doesn't run around in a cardboard box or anything, but in both games you end up playing as a hero that's just not quite as exciting as his predecessor, even though he's got essentially all the same tricks and more, while the real hero's story unfolds in the background. With that said, the latest Ace Attorney game is an excellent continuation of the series, featuring more compelling mysteries to unravel and lots of memorable characters. The basic gameplay hasn't changed much—it's still split between point-and-click investigation phases (in which you poke around crime scenes and talk to NPCs) and courtroom phases (in which you press witnesses for more information and raise objections by presenting evidence)—and that's not a bad thing. The formula is still plenty of fun, although the investigation phases seem to be lacking something now that the Psyche-Locks from the last two games have been omitted. The new touch-driven features—examining evidence in 3-D, perceiving suspects' nervous habits, and using a variety of forensic techniques to further your investigations—are fun additions, but they're underutilized. The perception abilities are used but a handful of times, and only rarely does closely inspecting evidence reveal a crucial clue. The story, however, will keep you guessing (Ace Attorney vets will especially enjoy finding out what happened to Phoenix), and the writing is very well done. I just wish that solving the cases had left me with the same sense of satisfaction as in previous Ace Attorney games; the conclusion of each case was never as decisive as I'd have liked. —CHRIS H.



ASSASSIN'S CREED:ALTAÏR'S CHRONICLES DS

WWII ACES Wii

WWII ACES Wii

ASSASSIN'S CREED: ALTAÏR'S CHRONICLES

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **GAMELOFT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Altaïr's Chronicles is supposed to be a prequel to the hit home-console game, but the only major connection between the two is that both games feature medieval assassin Altaïr fighting the Templars. Altaïr's Chronicles' story doesn't really tie into the original game, and it's an overall more linear, more traditional platforming experience—but that's not a bad thing. You go from point A to point B by jumping over gaps, creeping across balance beams, and avoiding spikes, fire, and snakes. It's fun for the most part—except when you can't correctly judge a jump due to the camera's placement—and it's very similar to Prince of Persia, which is a definite plus. And like Prince of Persia, the game is at its best when you're outside of combat. The fighting mechanics aren't terrible; the battles just starts to feel a little same-y with only a handful of combos and counterattacks at your disposal.

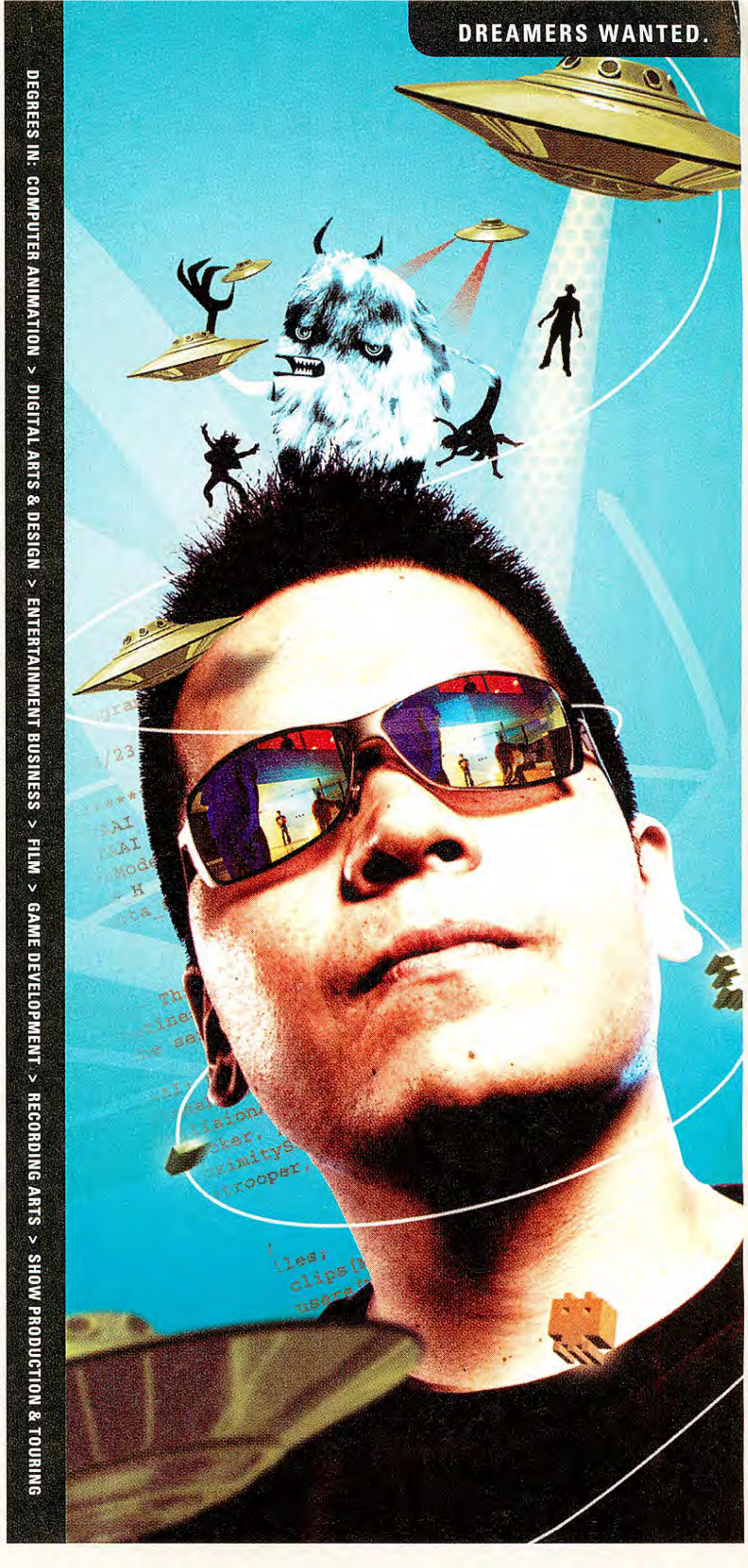
Strangely enough, Altaïr's Chronicles feels more stealth-centric than its console predecessor. At certain points, you must assume the identity of a guard or a scholar to sneak through enemy territory. These stealth bits—along with the quick-time-event boss fights and the pickpocketing and pressure-point minigames—help give the game some variety beyond the usual fighting, platforming, and puzzle-solving. Overall, it's this diversity that helps make Altaïr's Chronicles an entertaining adventure for the five to seven hours it lasts. —JUSTIN C.

WWII ACES

RATING: 3.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DESTINEER**
DEVELOPER: **ARCADE MOON**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Whoever cleared WWII Aces for takeoff needs to be court-martialed; this arcade-style flight game was clearly rushed. All of the available control schemes have significant problems, the graphics are unconscionably bad, and you'd have to be a real-life ace to get through some of these levels without pulling your hair out. Additionally, the inherent lack of sophisticated weaponry means that dogfights become extremely repetitive, a problem exacerbated by missions that require you to shoot down wave after wave of enemy squadrons all by your lonesome. (Flying co-op does make things more manageable, but the frame rate and draw distance take a major hit.) Yet more proof that slapping motion controls on a lousy game doesn't magically make it worthwhile. —STEVE T.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4 HITS
15
Menu

Draw a figure of eight to charge up your sword!

NARUTO: NINJA DESTINY DS

Animal Information
Dromedary Camel
Status

ZOO TYCOON 2 DS

SLIME TIME

Sword Play

DRAGON QUEST SWORDS: THE MASKED QUEEN AND THE TOWER OF MIRRORS

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **WII**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Swinging the Wii remote like a sword was one of the first things that came to mind when the controller was introduced, and it has been attempted numerous times, with mixed results. Now Square Enix is giving it a go with Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors, and I am pleased to say that it works rather well. Slicing and dicing baddies is as easy as it sounds—just swing the remote, and the game matches your strokes (except occasionally when the motion detection thinks you're thrusting forward when you're actually trying to slash). The real fun, though, is learning each enemy's nuances and knowing when it's the best time to strike. Other than that, it's a mostly uncomplicated, linear affair that's less a full-fledged RPG and more a light-gun shooter (or would that be "light-sword slasher"?) with RPG elements.

Dragon Quest Swords certainly has the familiar look of the long-running RPG series—from the Akira Toriyama-designed characters to the iconic Slimes—but don't expect a real meaty Dragon Quest experience. Take the story, for instance: three legendary heroes defeated Xiphos the Deathbringer a while back, but now Xiphos has returned, and it's up to you and your magic-wielding cohorts to stop him for good. Aside from a couple plot twists, the story is fairly basic throughout the around-10-hour adventure. That sounds short for a Dragon Quest game, but it's ideal for this one: any longer and the combat, as solid as it is, would become a chore. In addition to questing, there are two pass-the-controller multiplayer minigames that, sadly, do not keep you coming back for more. Still, while Dragon Quest Swords isn't exactly epic, it is entertaining overall. —JUSTIN C.

NARUTO: NINJA DESTINY

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **DREAM FACTORY**
ESRB: **TEEN**

In most cases, when a publisher gives us a review build of a game when we've never seen a preview version, it means that it isn't very good. In the case of Naruto: Ninja Destiny, however, it seems that the developer wanted the extra time to polish things up. See, when Ninja Destiny was released as Naruto: Shinobi Retsuden last year in Japan, it was exciting because it was the first 3-D Naruto fighting game on the DS, but it was also disappointing because of its simplistic-looking character models and horrid frame rate. Ninja Destiny looks much better, benefits from an improved frame rate, and has three new characters (Orochimaru, Jiraiya, and Tsunade).

The gameplay remains as basic as in the Japanese version. With only two attack buttons and one special jutsu button, it's easy to button-mash your way through the short Story mode on the default difficulty. Bump the challenge level up a notch, however, and playing the game requires a bit more strategy (and becomes a lot more fun). You have to manage your Chakra and your items more carefully: the game gives you six random items per match (items that heal you or give you more attack power, for example), so you have to utilize them wisely. This becomes especially important when going head-to-head against a friend via local wireless, where you frequently use your substitution jutsu to gain the upper hand. And multiplayer really is the best way to play. —JUSTIN C.

ZOO TYCOON 2 DS

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **ALTRON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

After a lackluster first effort on the DS, the Zoo Tycoon series has bounced back to offer a game that is both sound in fundamentals and loaded with bells and whistles. The object of the game remains the same: to achieve zoo-development goals through 15 missions in the Campaign game or to build a zoo from the ground up in the six-environment Freeform game. The graphics and sound are much improved over the first title's, and the stylus-based control is intuitive. The new Zookeeper mode gives you a chance to care for your animals personally (à la Nintendogs) with five touch-controlled minigames that have you feeding your charges, cleaning their pens, and seeing to their other needs. The minigames are identical for every creature, begging the question of how an alligator benefits from being brushed or petted. Nevertheless, the title is a good choice for zoo enthusiasts and as a first step for players new to Tycoon sims. —GEORGE S.

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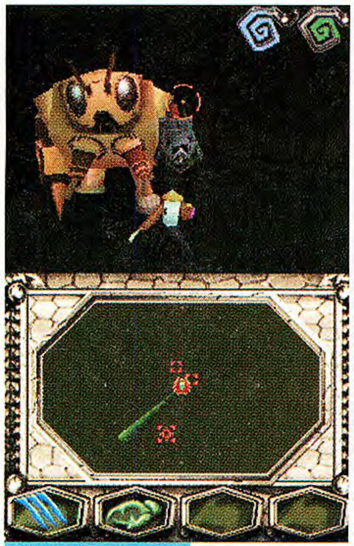
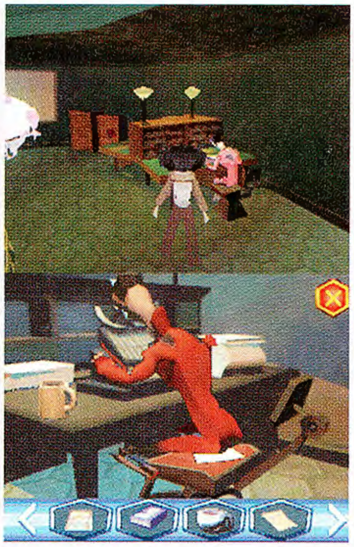
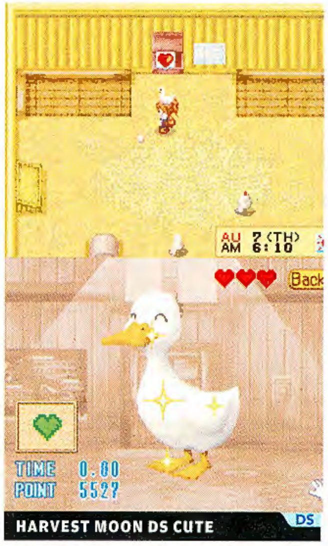
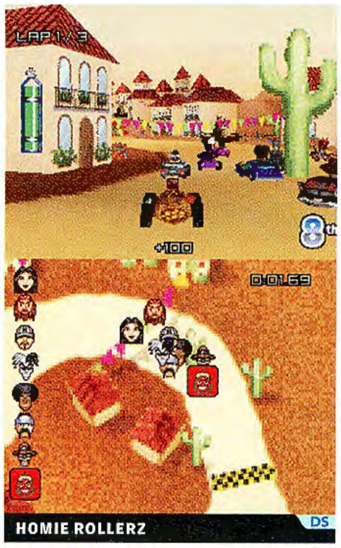






HARVEST MOON DS CUTE DS



HOMIE ROLLERZ DS

PEST CONTROL

Bugging Out

INSECTICIDE

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: GAMECOCK
DEVELOPER: CRACKPOT ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Insecticide tries to be a lot of things at once—platformer, shooter, and investigative adventure—which is a trick that seldom works well. To its credit, the stylish, bug-themed title puts a lot of effort into balancing all the different elements, but one aspect inevitably shines brighter than the others, forcing the question, "Why didn't they just make the whole game like that?" In this case, it's the investigative adventure levels, where you must interview witnesses and search crime scenes to uncover information about the case. These stages are fun and witty enough to have been the basis for the entire game. They also make excellent use of the touch screen—you examine clues and choose the questions to ask by tapping on context-sensitive images.

On the other hand, the platforming and shooting stages are plagued by problems that are unfortunately somewhat typical of DS games like this—maneuvers such as strafing and accurate jumping are hard to pull off without analog control. The camera is also frustrating—if you're too close to a wall, the camera will tuck up behind you, making it difficult to plan your next jump.

Overall, Insecticide suffers from environments that are too dark—I practically had to play it under my desk just to see what was going on. It might have been a conscious decision to make the game dark to help the tongue-in-cheek noir motif, but nonetheless, it's a glaring flaw.

Gamecock should be commended for once again supporting a new property (the company also published Dementium), as well as for Insecticide's solid production value. With that approach, we expect great things to come from Gamecock very soon. —CHRIS SH.

HARVEST MOON DS CUTE

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: NATSUME
DEVELOPER: MARVELOUS INTERACTIVE
ESRB: EVERYONE

Running a farm is hard work, even if it's the virtual homestead at the heart of Harvest Moon DS Cute—the latest in Natsume's prolific RPG franchise. The game includes a number of Animal Crossing-esque features absent from 2006's Harvest Moon DS, such as opportunities to select your wardrobe and expand and decorate your house. The other big difference between the games is that Cute players woo eligible bachelors instead of bachelorettes...at least they can do so if they find a spare moment away from their chores. Attending to business is job one—managing time and resources to maximize profit from fishing, collecting items in the wild, growing seasonal crops, raising animals, or a mix of these pursuits. The game's social aspects focus on calendar events and discerning the likes and dislikes of the local bachelors. Unfortunately, the characters, many of whom will be recognizable to franchise veterans, aren't very compelling, and some of these guys are downright creepy. But what's a girl to do?

There are some other blemishes on Cute, such as scroll bars that don't indicate where you are on a list. And although much of the game is played with the control pad and buttons, there are also stylus/touch-screen actions, so be prepared to juggle!

Interface issues aside, life in Forget-Me-Not Valley is challenging and mostly fun, and it doesn't really matter if your goal is to expand your house, get rich, or woo the perfect mate. As in real life, the choice is yours. —SCOTT P.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Stylish arcade-style soccer returns in EA's **FIFA Street 3** for DS, boasting touch-screen special moves and minigames.... The Homies are coming out of vending machines and into the DS in Destineer's kart-style racing game **Homie Rollerz**, complete with numerous characters, courses, and weapons.... Konami's lauded singing series is back with **Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore** for Wii, featuring 40 songs to test your singing talents.... A global assortment of courses, multiple game modes (including Championship and Stunt modes), and the official Kawasaki license are the highlights of Bold Games's **Kawasaki Jet Ski** for Wii.... Brash Games's **Jumper** for Wii is based on the movie of the same name. You'll use your teleportation skills to fight foes at exotic locations around the world.... The disturbingly large-headed babies of Bratz have traded in their tramp attire to become alien-fighting superheroes in **Bratz: Super Babyz for DS.** That doesn't bode well for humanity.

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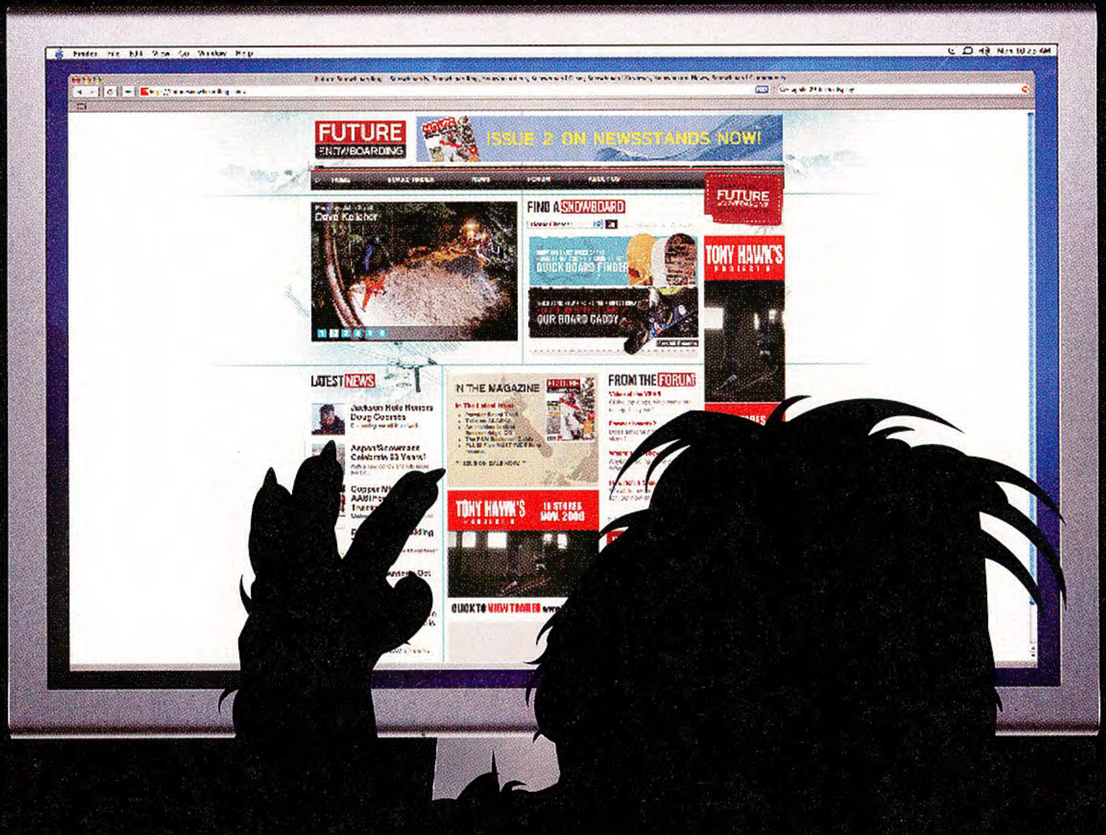
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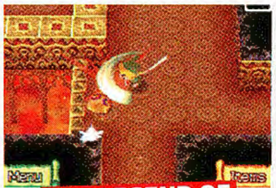
DAYS OF FUN

Gaming has been in a sort of limbo: a lot of fantastic games were released this past holiday season, and we'll have to wait a little while for some more excellent titles to hit shelves. That's not to say that it's all been "meh"—both Advance Wars: Days of Ruin (8.5) and Professor Layton and the Curious Village (8.5) for DS are undoubtedly great games. Most everything else last issue was definitely good (with one exception), but slightly disappointing after being spoiled by the holiday hits. Just remember: "Good things come to those who wait."

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Wii				
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Bionicle Heroes	5.0	Eidos	216	E10+
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bust-a-Move Bash!	6.5	Majesco	217	E
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	7.5	Majesco	216	E
Cosmic Family	N/A	Ubisoft	215	E
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2	7.0	Atari	211	T
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
Escape from Bug Island!	3.5	Eidos	217	M
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
The Godfather: Blackhand Edition	8.0	Electronic Arts	216	M
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
Heatseeker	7.5	Codemasters	215	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Kororinpa: Marble Mania	7.0	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
Mario Party 8	7.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Medal of Honor: Vanguard	6.0	Electronic Arts	217	T
Meet the Robinsons	6.5	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	8.0	Midway	217	M
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	4.5	Disney Interactive	217	T
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
Prince of Persia: Rival Swords	7.0	Ubisoft	215	T
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Sonic and the Secret Rings	8.5	Sega	214	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Spider-Man 3	6.0	Activision	217	T
SSX Blur	8.5	Electronic Arts	215	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
Super Paper Mario	9.5	Nintendo	216	E
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Surf's Up	6.0	Ubisoft	217	E10+
Tamagotchi: Party On!	2.5	Namco Bandai	217	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
TMNT	5.0	Ubisoft	215	E10+
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
Wing Island	5.5	Hudson Soft/ Konami	215	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO GAMECUBE				
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
Radio Allergy	5.0	0~3	215	E
TMNT	N/A	Ubisoft	214	E10+
NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E

REVIEWER NOTES



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

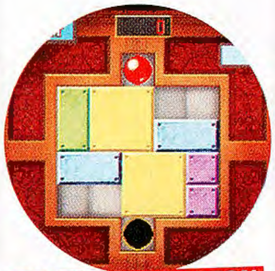
A long time in coming, Phantom Hourglass proved to be well worth the wait. With its natural stylus-driven navigation and onscreen map-marking capabilities, it has, once and for all, proven that touch-screen control is more than mere novelty.

—GEORGE S.

ZACK & WIKI: QUEST FOR BARBAROS'S TREASURE

Even though I was occasionally frustrated by the motion controls, the puzzles kept me coming back for more. Play it!

—CHRIS H.



PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE

I have to admit that I never saw the crossover appeal of games like Brain Age for the regular gamer market, and I understand why my mom doesn't have that much interest in Castlevania. But in Professor Layton and the Curious Village, I see the future for crossover titles. I had the same reaction to the quirky title as Chris Hoffman—it's impossible to put down. And I'm sure my mom will feel the same way.

—CHRIS SH.

Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania	5.5	Majesco	216	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Cartoon Network Racing	N/A	The Game Factory	213	E
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Cookie & Cream	6.5	Agetec	217	E
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
• Custom Robo Arena	7.5	Nintendo	215	E10+
Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom	5.0	Konami	217	E10+
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
Diner Dash: Sizzle & Serve	6.5	Eidos	217	E
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru Densetsu	4.0	Atari	217	E
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey	7.0	Atlus	217	T
F-24 Stealth Fighter	3.5	Majesco	215	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales	7.0	Square Enix	216	E
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Fossil League D.T.C.	N/A	D3PA	214	E
Freedom Wings	6.0	Natsume	207	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Kim Possible: Global Gemini	N/A	Buena Vista	214	E10+
Konami Classics Series: Arcade Hits	7.5	Konami	214	E10+
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	8.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 2	5.0	Konami	215	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Meteos: Disney Magic	7.5	Buena Vista	214	E
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Council 3	6.0	Tomy/D3PA	217	E10+
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	7.0	Disney Interactive	217	E10+
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pogo Island	7.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
• Pokémon Diamond/Pearl	9.0	Nintendo	216	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFD Interactive	219	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	4.0	D3PA	215	E10+
Quickspot	5.5	Namco Bandai	214	E10+
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
The Settlers	5.0	Ubisoft	217	E
Shrek The Third	7.0	Activision	217	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
SNK Vs. Capcom Card Fighters DS	7.0	SNK Playmore	215	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
• Spectrobes	8.0	Buena Vista	214	E
Spider-Man 3	7.0	Activision	217	E10+
Steel Horizon	4.5	Konami	214	E10+
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Theme Park	6.0	Electronic Arts	215	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Time Ace	6.5	Konami	216	E10+
TMNT	5.5	Ubisoft	214	E10+
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
Touch The Dead	5.5	Eidos	217	M
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
Wario: Master of Disguise	6.5	Nintendo	214	E10+
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2007	N/A	Konami	215	E
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E

GAME BOY ADVANCE

Back to Stone	N/A	Graffiti Entertainment	214	E
Meet the Robinsons	N/A	Buena Vista	215	E
TMNT	7.0	Ubisoft	214	E10+

MEGA MAN ZX ADVENT

Precise controls, detailed graphics, intense action, and a multitude of Mega Man transformations (each with their own attacks and abilities) allow ZX Advent to carry on the Mega Man tradition in fine form. While I appreciate the addition of an English dub (missing from the first ZX), the voice acting could be better, and the map system still has a lot of room for improvement. —CHRIS H.

TALES OF SYMPHONIA

> *There aren't a whole lot of great RPGs on Wii at the moment, so if you haven't played it yet, I highly recommend the original Tales of Symphonia on GCN. Plus, it'll help you get up to speed for this month's cover story.*
>
> —STEVE T.

GHOST SQUAD

Unfortunately, I haven't had a whole lot of spare time to play games these days, but I did manage to play some Ghost Squad over the holidays. Yes, it's a short, simplistic light-gun shooter, but it's also good old-fashioned fun. I'm glad that Sega's bringing House of the Dead to Wii as well, but where's Virtua Cop? —JUSTIN C.

COMMUNITY

EVENTS

Jam with the Band

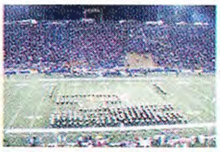
During halftime, the Cal Marching Band plays some of Nintendo's greatest hits.

Earlier this year, the University of California Berkeley's marching band performed a video game-themed halftime show during a football game against Washington State University, providing some fine entertainment in an otherwise disappointing year for the Golden Bears. The show featured music and formations from some of Nintendo's finest—Mario, Metroid, Zelda, and Pokémon were all represented. Seeing a giant Triforce on the 50-yard line of a college football game is pretty awesome, and the Pokémon formation was particularly comical, as two Poké Balls opened up to reveal the rival team mascots. The older alumni in the stands must've had absolutely no idea what they were looking at, but the student crowd went nuts for the show.

We talked to Ben Smith, the band's PR director, to find out more about how the show was created. He said the idea came from members of the student-run band. "Our show selection process is open to the full band. Members put together a selection of pieces of songs that they believe will make a good show. We select the best 6 or 7 to perform [throughout the season]," Ben said. "The charting for the show took about a month, and involved 5 to 6 students pulling late hours to make sure that it looked good on the field." All that hard work paid off. Great job! —CHRIS SH.

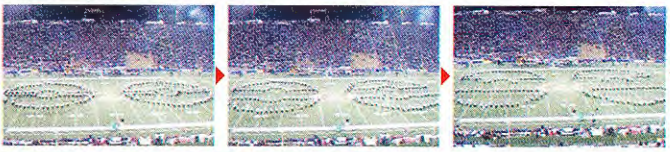
The band starts with Pong. Wait a sec—Pong didn't have any music!

Even the popular L-Block from Tetris makes a cameo appearance.



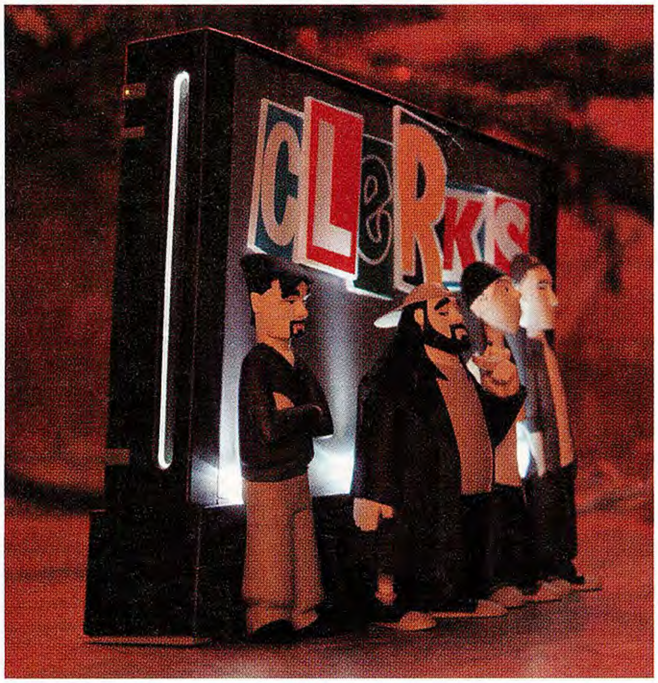
If you turn the page upside down, you should see the Mortal Kombat logo.

A Pokémon battle erupts in the middle of the field. Gotta catch 'em all!



Here's one everyone reading this should instantly recognize: The Triforce.

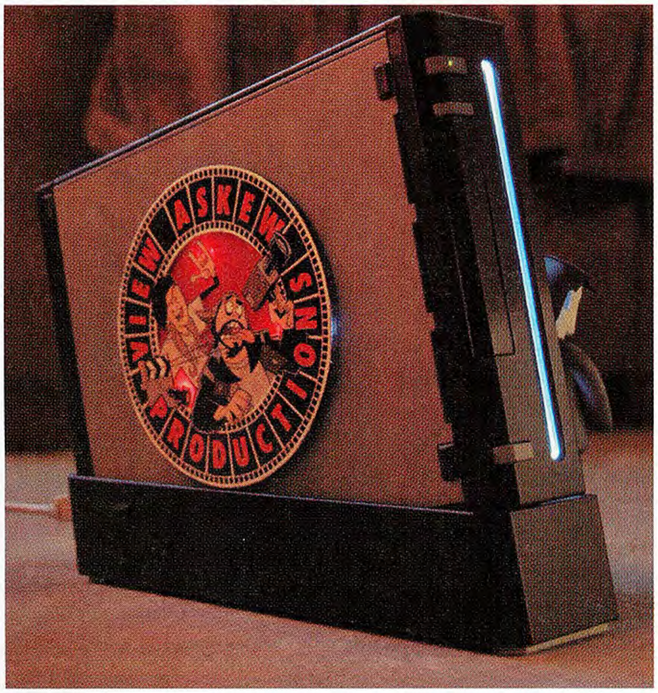
We can't help but think of the Super Mario Bros. music when we see this.



MOD JOB

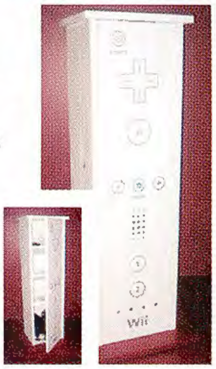
Wii Askew

It turns out that director Kevin Smith (*Clerks 2*, *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back*) is an avid gamer, and he's now the proud owner of a custom *Clerks*-themed Wii designed by artist Ramon Stokes. Stokes spent about 60 hours on the console, and the end result is pretty amazing. It was painted with flat grayscale colors to match the black-and-white of the original film. One side features the logo of Smith's View Askew Productions, while the other has the movie's four main characters (Dante, Randal, Jay, and Silent Bob) backlit to highlight the *Clerks* logo above them. The two controllers were painted black, with Smith's name painted on one and Silent Bob's on the other. Stokes called the whole endeavor a "crazy experience," but with the way this one turned out, we wouldn't be surprised if other famous gamers want him to give their Wii systems a facelift. —TOM H.



FANDOM

Remote Storage



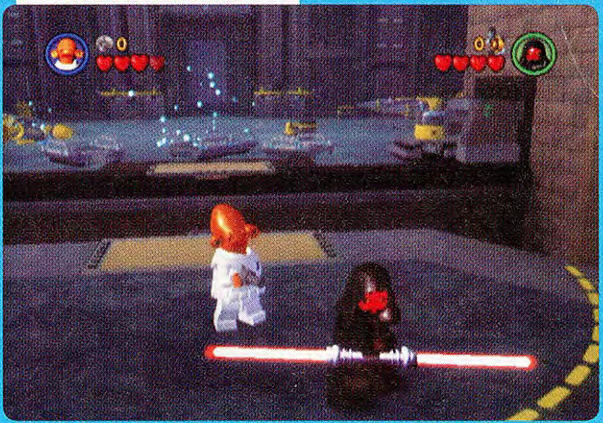
If you're like us, you've got more Wii accessories than you have room for, so you'll likely wish that you had a custom storage unit like Craig's from Ohio. Standing three feet tall, his one-of-a-kind, Wii remote-inspired cabinet was made for him by his dad. The detail is so good that it almost looks like you could play games with it. We can't help but be a bit envious. —TOM H.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

There was a lot of buzz around Volume 224's Super Mario Galaxy screenshot—check out some of our readers's captions below. This month, we promise that it's *not* a trap. All you aspiring Jedi should trust your feelings and email your best caption to **screentest@futureus.com.**

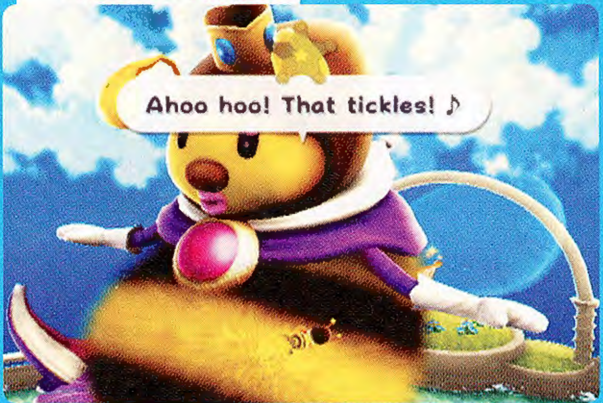
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



"You can't repel firepower of this magnitude!'

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. Think you can do better?

VOLUME 224'S SHOT



"The Pillsbury Dough Boy has resorted to disguises to keep people from poking his tummy. It hasn't been working." —DANNYBOY

"Hold still your majesty—the remote is here somewhere...." —DANILO V.

"And the NP Award for Most Awkward Gaming Moment of 2007 goes to...." —JEFFREY M.

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NEXT MONTH

You won't want to miss this one!

Start Your Engines!

Next issue we preview Square Enix's The World Ends with You, playtest Okami for Wii, and review Bully and Ninja Gaiden DS. Oh, and we'll take a certain racing game for a test drive.

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